The United Nations under Ban Ki-moon

Give Diplomacy a Chance

Marcel Jesenský

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ISBN 978-3-030-12219-5 ISBN 978-3-030-12220-1 (eBook)
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-12220-1

Library of Congress Control Number: 2018968355

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The registered company address is: Gewerbestrasse 11, 6330 Cham, Switzerland

To Zuzka and my Family

Preface and Acknowledgements

This book is the outcome of an effort to compound my various interests—diplomacy, international relations, international organizations, global governance and the United Nations. The study deals with a selection of activities of the United Nations in 2007–2016. Inevitably, I left a great deal out while activities that others might consider peripheral have found their place here. The study is not meant to be comprehensive, rather, just the first step towards more complete look at the United Nations in this eventful decade.

The United Nations, despite all its challenges, remains an indispensable forum to advance the common goals of mankind and the unique center of multilateral diplomacy. During the ten years in which Ban Ki-moon has been the Secretary-General, the Organization has brought Member States together to deal with critical issues of climate change, development, violent extremism, Ebola and troubling situations in Syria, Sudan, the Middle East and elsewhere.

This work examines the selected United Nations activities in the decade of 2007–2016 and their impact on international relations. This has been a decade of turmoil. The world suffered the biggest financial collapse since the Great Depression. The challenges have been as numerous and as complicated as in any decade in United Nations history—polarization, armed conflicts and people in need of humanitarian aid.

The United Nations Secretary-General is not the leader of the world, the primacy of the work comes to Member States. During his tenure at the United Nations, Ban Ki-moon worked with UN Member States, civil

society and other partners to advance multilateral cooperation. Despite turbulences on many fronts, the world came together to adopt an aspiring new plan for the world's future, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and the landmark 2015 Paris Agreement on climate change, the defining threat of modern age. Yet, the work of the United Nations is never finished. There are many issues—unfinished business—in Syria, Yemen, the Middle East and elsewhere, to mobilize global solidarity and leadership.

Understanding and explaining the role of the United Nations and its Secretary-General requires to go beyond the narratives found in the media coverage. Relying on United Nations sources, this work hopes to offer another view of the Organization in 2007–2016. The United Nations and its activities play an important role in understanding of international relations and global governance in our age what some call "à la carte multilateralism." The Organization and its Secretary-General are a reminder of the strength of universality and the importance of global cooperation. The questions posed by examining the decade of 2007–2016 are as relevant now as they were a decade ago.

Completion of this book would not have been possible without the help of numerous people and institutions during my research and writing. Many authors and works nourished my original interest, many people helped me to advance with my work. Therefore, I would like to make here evident my gratitude to all those concerned.

The book has benefited from the comments of anonymous reviewers. Louise Martin-Murphy read drafts and pointed out stylistic inconsistencies in my manuscript for which I am deeply thankful. I am immensely grateful to Stanislav J. Kirschbaum for his support, suggestions, comments and ideas. My gratitude also goes to the editorial team at Palgrave Macmillan for believing in my project and bringing it to fruition.

This book is dedicated to my family. Zuzana, my wife and a superb reference librarian, took part in this project in every way. I owe her my most profound gratitude for being my strongest supporter and sternest critic. In the end the responsibility for any shortcomings in this book rests solely with me.

Ottawa, Canada — Marcel Jesenský

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Abbreviations/Acronyms

ADF	*Forces démocratiques alliées*
AMIS	African Union Mission in Sudan
AMISOM	African Union Mission in Somalia
ASEOWA	African Union Support for Ebola in West Africa
AU	African Union
CENO	*Conférence épiscopale Nationale du Congo*
CIS	Commonwealth of Independent States
CNDP	*Congrès national pour la défence du people*
COP	Conference of Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
CPA	Comprehensive Peace Agreement
CWC	Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on their Destruction
DPKO	Department of Peacekeeping Operations
DPRK	Democratic People's Republic of Korea
DRC	Democratic Republic of the Congo
DSG	Deputy Secretary-General
ECOSOC	Economic and Social Council
EU	European Union
EULEX	European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo
FARC–EP	*Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia—Ejército del Pueblo*
FARDC	*Forces Armées de la République Démocratique du Congo*
FDLR	*Forces Démocratiques de Libération du Rwanda*
FIB	UN Force Intervention Brigade

FSA	Free Syrian Army
FTFs	Foreign terrorist fighters
FYROM	Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia
G-7	Group of Seven
G-8	Group of Eight
GA	General Assembly
GUAM	Georgia, Ukraine, Azerbaijan, Moldova
HRC	Human Rights Council
IAEA	International Atomic Energy Agency
ICC	International Criminal Court
ICGLR	International Conference on the Great Lakes Region
ICJ	International Court of Justice
ICO	International Civilian Office
ICTY	International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia
IGAD	Intergovernmental Authority on Development
IPCC	Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change
ISAF	International Security Assistance Force
ISIL	Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant
ISIS	Islamic State of Iraq and Syria
ISS	International Space Station
JCPOA	Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action
JEM	Justice and Equality Movement
JIM	Joint Investigative Mechanism of the UN and the OPCW
JIT	Joint Investigation Team
KFOR	Kosovo Force
KLA/UCK	Kosovo Liberation Army
LAS	League of Arab States
LRA	Lord's Resistance Army
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
MINUSCA	UN Peacekeeping Mission in the Central African Republic
MINUSMA	UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali
MNF-I	Multinational Force in Iraq
MONUC	UN Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo
MONUSCO	UN Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo
NAM	Non-Aligned Movement
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NCP	National Congress Party
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
NPT	Non-Proliferation Treaty
ODA	Official development assistance

OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
OIC	Organization of the Islamic Conference
OSCE	Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe
PAHO	Pan American Health Organization
PARECO	Coalition of Congolese Patriotic Resistance
PLO	Palestine Liberation Organization
R2P	Responsibility to protect
RwP	Responsibility when protecting
SC	Security Council
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SLA	Sudan Liberation Army
SPLA	Sudan People's Liberation Army
SPLM/A	Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army
TCCs	Troop-Contributing countries
TNC	Transitional National Council
UDI	Unilateral declaration of independence
UNAMA	UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan
UNAMI	UN Assistance Mission for Iraq
UNAMID	African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur
UNCA	United Nations Correspondents Association
UNDOF	UN Disengagement Observer Force
UNDSS	UN Department of Safety and Security
UNEP	UN Environment Programme
UNESCO	UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNFCCC	UN Framework Convention on Climate Change
UNHCR	UN High Commissioner for Refugees
UNISFA	UN Interim Security Force for Abyei
UNMEER	UN Mission for Ebola Emergency Response
UNMIK	UN Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo
UNMIS	UN Mission in the Sudan
UNMISS	UN Mission in the Republic of South Sudan
UNMOVIC	UN Monitoring, Verification and Inspection Commission
UNOCI	UN Operation in Côte d'Ivoire
UNOMIG	UN Observer Mission in Georgia
UNOWA	UN Office for West Africa
UNRWA	UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East
UNSCOM	UN Special Commission
UNSMIL	UN Support Mission in Libya
UNSMIS	UN Supervision Mission in Syria
UNSOM	UN Assistance Mission in Somalia

UN-Women	UN Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women
UPDF	Uganda People Defence Force
WHO	World Health Organization
WMDs	Weapons of mass destruction

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction: I Will Not Ban Anything

> He said he does not want to be called "Mr. Ban", because he is not planning to ban anything. He is not going to ban any constructive dialogue with the staff - definitely not. So it's "bahn gee-moon."
>
> Michele Montas, Spokesperson of the Secretary-General[1]

[1] Daily Press Briefing (hereafter DPB), 2 January 2007. The Secretary-General himself teased that he would not try to ban all that was not good for everyone. SG/SM/10836-NGO/609, 10 January 2007. Michele Montas, Spokesperson of the Secretary-General,

The sources for this book are UN documents, press releases and meetings coverage of the Security Council, General Assembly, Economic and Social Council, as well as other United Nations bodies. UN documents from the General Assembly, Security Council, Human Rights Council, Economic and Social Council and others are available on the UN documents website—https://www.un.org/en/documents/index.html—searched by symbol (e.g. A/72/1). Press releases and meetings coverage of the Security Council, General Assembly and other United Nations bodies are available on the website of the Meetings Coverage Section, United Nations Department of Public Information—https://www.un.org/press/en/advanced-search—under their symbol (e.g. SC/9021) or title (e.g. Press Conference by United Nations Special Coordinator for Lebanon) or/and date. The author has limited the facts of publication in the notes to a symbol, a meeting number and a date in most cases. The information on an access date and a URL is not referenced at each point as it is possible to positively identify and locate each source without them and accordingly to reduce the notes' extent.

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M. Jesenský, *The United Nations under Ban Ki-moon*,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-12220-1_1

It has been often said that the twenty-first century would be an era of Asia Pacific. North-East Asia, that means China, Japan and the Republic of Korea, has been regarded as economically and socially dynamic region, commended, even envied, by many people around the world. On 1 January 2007 Korean diplomat Ban Ki-moon became the first Secretary-General from East Asia, further enhancing the region's high profile in international area.[2]

The Charter of the United Nations makes the Secretary-General the chief administrative officer of the Organization, but at the same time bestows upon him an initiative on any matter which may threaten the maintenance of international peace and security. This dichotomy is captured by the ongoing debate among the scholars and practitioners whether and to what extent a UN chief should be more Secretary or a General. The literature on the Secretary-General offers three streams of writing on the role of office-holders: emphasizing importance of contextual factors for the office, accepting centrality of individual office-holder or considering the differences in the personal characteristics and leadership style of the Secretaries-General.[3]

Most scholars consider the political context—the activities of Member States and the international political environment—to be the most important factor to determine the role of the Secretary-General. This stream emphasizes the broader dynamics of the world politics. In such an approach, the individual, and his personal characteristics and initiatives are downplayed or ignored, the scope of his activities is inherently limited by circumstances.[4]

clarified for the media how the new Secretary-General should be addressed: "Korean names formally begin with the family name followed by the given name, so his name should be stated as Ban Ki-moon. His surname is 'Ban' spelled b-a-n and pronounced 'bahn'. His given name is Ki-moon, with a capital 'K', small 'i', hyphen and small 'm-o-o-n'. The accurate pronunciation of that would be 'gee-moon'." DPB, 2 January 2007.

[2] SG/SM/18377, 16 December 2016.

[3] Kent J. Kille, *From Manager to Visionary: The Secretary-General of the United Nations* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 8–9.

[4] Kille, *From Manager to Visionary*, 9. A series on the former Secretaries-General (Gaglione, Firestone, Heller, Lankevich, Ryan, Burgess) and memoirs by current or former participants (Barros, Bolton) examines the institutional features and international dynamics, providing lessons for multilateralism.

A second stream of writing examines the importance of the individual. In this approach, the role of an office-holder is given greater consideration. In fact, the importance of all office-holders is emphasized in a positive light. This so-called "super Secretary-General syndrome" establishes that every Secretary-General has played an influential role in international affairs. Intensity and priority among various arguments are here acknowledged, but this does not detract from the thesis of centrality of the Secretary-General's position.[5]

The third approach addresses the differences in the personal characteristics and leadership style of the Secretaries-General. Evaluation of their personal characteristics and leadership styles permits to insert the office-holder onto the imaginary scale of desired managerial or leadership qualities (Secretary or General?). More recent works tried to establish, and eventually to compare, key personal traits required for ideal leadership style.[6]

The General Assembly appointed Foreign Minister Ban Ki-moon of the Republic of Korea as the next United Nations Secretary-General on 13 October 2006. He succeeded 2001 Nobel Peace Prize winner Kofi Annan of Ghana, who led the United Nations for a decade. Earlier in his 40-year diplomatic career, Ban Ki-moon served in his country's Mission to the United Nations and, in 2001, was Chef de Cabinet to then-General Assembly President Han Seung-soo.[7]

Ban Ki-moon—"a teenager from a dusty village in Korea" in his own words—never expected to be a public servant. He credited his decision to become a diplomat and dedicate himself to public service to his meeting with President John F. Kennedy. He was in the United States as

[5] Kille, *From Manager to Visionary*, 9–10. The memoirs by former office-holders (Boutros-Ghali, Waldheim, Pérez de Cuéllar), participants (Brian Urquhart's *Hammarskjöld*, Stanley Meisler's *Kofi Annan: A Man of Peace in a World of War*), and others, illuminate office-holders legacies.

[6] Kille, *From Manager to Visionary*, 10–13. Kille connects six key personal characteristics—responsivity, belief that can influence, need for recognition, need for relationship, supranationalism and problem-solving emphasis—to the three ideal leadership styles—managerial, strategic and visionary, and undertakes three detailed case studies to explore the behavioral patterns of Hammarskjöld, Waldheim and Annan. See Kille, *From Manager to Visionary*, 13–255. In addition to Kille, Robert W. Cox, Akinrinade, Nabil A. Elaraby and others, provide additional views and reflections on office-holders personality.

[7] GA/10514, 31st Meeting (PM), 13 October 2006.

part of a tour organized by the Red Cross for a group of young people from around the world. President Kennedy encouraged everyone to be a global citizen and love his or her country by serving the world.[8]

Ban Ki-moon liked to point out that the United Nations was the story of his life, and of many Korean people: "After the Korean War, United Nations aid fed us. United Nations textbooks taught us." For him, the power of the United Nations and global solidarity were never abstract or academic. With the help of the United Nations and other international partners, his country recovered and rebuilt. His profound appreciation grew even stronger during his service with the United Nations.[9]

New Secretary-General pledged to restore trust between Member States and UN Secretariat, to strengthen institutional capacity, and to change the working culture of the Organization itself. He saw Africa with Darfur and Somalia at the top of his agenda. He desired to inject new momentum into the search for peace and stability in the Middle East and to address the political and security challenges posed by the cases of Iran, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Afghanistan and Iraq, and the status of Kosovo. He planned to step up work to halt climate change and to reach the Millennium Development Goals by the target date of 2015.[10]

Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon started his duties at a daunting time for international affairs. He stepped into trouble on his first day. Speaking to reporters and asked about the death sentence imposed in Iraq against Saddam Hussein, he suggested that it was up to each Member State to decide on the issue of capital punishment, adding that all States should pay due respect to international humanitarian law. The Secretary-General was sending a mixed message on the Iraq death penalty situation, because the United Nations remained opposed to capital punishment, even in the case of war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide.[11]

The first statement on Saddam Hussein's execution and his refusal in other interviews to back the former statement by Kofi Annan that the war in Iraq was illegitimate, raised concerns about Ban Ki-moon's level of independence from the US positions, especially considering that they

[8] SG/SM/15702, 11 March 2014.

[9] SG/SM/15702, 11 March 2014; SG/SM/18359-GA/11873, 12 December 2016.

[10] DPB, 11 January 2007; DPB, 31 January 2007.

[11] DPB, 2 January 2007.

backed his appointment strongly. Being considered too close to some US officials and comparisons made between him and former Secretary-General Kofi Annan and their different leadership styles, drew attention of correspondents and the media. In response, Ban Ki-moon maintained that as a "middle of the road" man, as taught by Confucius, he has been trying to maintain harmonious, very good and friendly relationships with everybody, not only in Korea, but in dealing with international affairs. His leadership style and early results were vindicated by the public support. According to the poll taken in 20 nations in June 2008, of all world leaders, only the Secretary-General received largely positive ratings.[12]

When Ban Ki-moon took over as the Secretary-General in 2007, relations between the United States and the United Nations were not good. The United Nations was still overwhelmed by the crisis in Iraq. His predecessor carried the Organization through the crisis with honour but was castigated by Washington run by ideologues. Ban Ki-moon patiently worked as bridge-builder among all stakeholders to rebuild the damaged relationships. He welcomed President Obama's "reset" even in the relations between the United States and the United Nations. Furthermore, the Secretary-General seized critical global issues—climate change, managing the consequences of the international economic crisis, global health and global terrorism—to strengthen the United Nations to be able to play a critical role in managing the global challenges.[13]

In June 2011, Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon proposed himself to the membership of the General Assembly and the Security Council for consideration for a second term as Secretary-General of the United Nations. His second term was virtually assured, because there was no opposition. By that time, Ban Ki-moon's accomplishments since he first took office in January 2007, included his role in putting climate change squarely on the global agenda, advancing sustainable development, creating a new dimension for the responsibility to protect, and setting up UN Women entity to empower women worldwide.[14]

[12]DPB, 11 January 2007; DPB, 18 June 2008; SG/SM/11091, Press Conference by Secretary-General, 16 July 2007; Press conference on general debate of General Assembly's sixty-third session, 29 September 2008.

[13]SG/SM/11094, 17 July 2007; SG/SM/12306, 11 June 2009; SG/SM/12131, 10 March 2009; SG/SM/12133, 12 March 2009; SG/SM/18377, 16 December 2016.

[14]SG/SM/13622, 6 June 2011; GA/11102, 101st Meeting (PM), 21 June 2011.

On 21 June 2011, several months in advance, the General Assembly unanimously appointed Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for a second five-year term beginning 1 January 2012. The Assembly also expressed its appreciation for his effective and dedicated service during his first term. He pledged to lead the Organization with a clear timeframe in mind: the target date for the Millennium Development Goals in 2015.[15]

Five years later, on 14 December 2016, the Security Council unanimously adopted resolution 2324 (2016) amid applause, paying tribute to Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for his exceptional efforts in the decade of 2007–2016 to solve international problems in economic, social, environmental and cultural fields. His mandate was indeed denoted, as the Security Council's President, Román Oyarzun Marchesi of Spain, remarked, with two remarkable successes, the Sustainable Development Goals and the Paris Agreement on Climate Change, both stemming from and confirming his diplomatic acumen.[16]

Given the contemporary nature of the topic, the examination of the United Nations activities under Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon in the following chapters will try to identify and explain UN successes and failures in the selected cases. The examination of the decade 2007–2016 is grounded on a collection of UN sources. This could allow to demonstrate the capabilities or limitations of the United Nations and at the same time to shed a light on the role played by Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon. The adopted approach is far from exhausting all aspects of this intriguing period. As there has been no examination of Ban Ki-moon's mandate so far, this work seeks to open the way to an overview and systematic analysis of the legacy of the eighth Secretary-General of the United Nations.

In the following fourteen chapters the author presents a selection of UN activities in the decade of Ban Ki-moon's tenure as Secretary-General. Chapters 2, 3 and 4 focus on development, climate change and the Ebola virus. These three issues demonstrated multilateralism's potential in bringing the international community to work alongside national Governments. The following six chapters (Chapters 5–10) focus on the regional crises with an impact on global security and multilateral diplomacy. The Democratic Republic of the Congo and Sudan/South Sudan

[15] GA/11102, 101st Meeting (PM), 21 June 2011.

[16] SC/12626, 7836th Meeting (AM), 14 December 2016.

(Chapters 5 and 6) represented sources of hope and frustration for all and constituted robust UN peacekeeping enterprises. Afghanistan and Iraq (Chapters 7 and 8) with their legacies of foreign presence tested the limits of international interventionism. The cases of Libya and Syria (Chapters 9 and 10) went even further in exposing the dilemmas of the international responsibility to protect and intervene in the complex internal and regional context. Chapters 11, 12 and 13 explore the cases of Kosovo, Georgia and Ukraine, dealing with the legacy of unresolved European post-Cold War security architecture. While each case represented a true *sui generis* issue, their potential to polarize the Euro-Atlantic and Euro-Asian spaces linked them together. Chapters 14 and 15 deal with Iran's nuclear programme and the Middle East peace process, the issues of multilateral diplomacy and global impact. In both cases the good-faith efforts by all parties and dialogue and patient diplomacy pointed towards resolving long-standing international issues. The final chapter summarizes the findings and offers some observations drawn from the previous chapters.

PART I

International Cooperation and Multilateralism

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CHAPTER 2

Development for All: We Still Can

> This is a little bit of rhetoric, if I may say, but planet Earth, nature, in a sense, has been very kind to human beings, but we have not been kind to nature. Nature does not wait while we negotiate.
>
> UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon[1]

The United Nations system defined the agenda of internationally agreed development objectives through the historic series of conferences and summits over two decades. The most visible expression of the United Nations Development Agenda was the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) adopted by all the world's Governments in 2000. The MDGs set out a broad range of anti-poverty targets—from halving extreme poverty to halting the spread of HIV/AIDS and providing universal primary education—all by the target date of 2015.[2]

Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon emphasized, early on in his mandate, that development was central to the United Nations' mission. The Development Agenda reflected the importance the entire United Nations system attached to building a more equitable, healthier and more secure world for all. Addressing various disparities, a central tenet of the Goals was an ambitious commitment to cut extreme poverty

[1] SG/SM/14336-ENV/DEV/1286, Press Conference by Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon on Rio+20, 6 June 2012.

[2] DSG/SM/361-DEV/2652-GA/10668, 6 December 2007; Press Conference by Non-Governmental Organizations on Rio+20, 1 June 2012.

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M. Jesenský, *The United Nations under Ban Ki-moon*,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-12220-1_2

worldwide by half. The United Nations established the year 2015 as the target date for achieving the MDGs. In 2007, midway to the target date, the world as a whole lagged in the race to achieve all of these Goals.[3]

In July 2007, the Economic and Social Council reviewed the MDGs Report 2007, the collective record towards the achievement of the MDGs at the midpoint between their adoption and the 2015 target date. The record was mixed, the world was seriously off track on some of the Goals. The results suggested that success was still possible in most parts of the world, but much remained to be done. Only one of the eight regional groups was on track to achieve all the MDGs. By 2015, all major regions except sub-Saharan Africa were expected to reduce the proportion of people living in extreme poverty to less than half the 1990 rate. The MDGs remained achievable in most countries, but only if political leaders took urgent and concerted action.[4]

In January 2008, noting mixed progress in achieving the ambitious MDGs, Ban Ki-moon urged greater action on the development front, noting that, in passing the midpoint to the 2015 deadline, the world faced a development emergency. While there were improvements across Africa, absolute poverty in sub-Saharan Africa had risen over the last decade and not a single country in the subregion was on track to achieve the Goals. To address that situation and to mobilize resources, the Secretary-General decided to convene a high-level meeting on the MDGs in 2008 to bridge the implementation gap. It was the General Assembly which established the historic MDGs. Therefore, it had a responsibility to monitor their implementation and the commitments made by all parties to achieve them. For that reason, General Assembly President Srgjan Kerim proposed that the Assembly meet each year until 2015 to take stock of global implementation and to hold all partners to account for their MDG commitments.[5]

The report *Delivering on the Global Partnership for Achieving the Millennium Development Goals* sounded a strong alarm because delivery on commitments made by Member States had been deficient. Official

[3] SG/SM/10843-ECOSOC/6247, 17 January 2007; DSG/SM/313-ECOSOC/6261, 2 April 2007; DSG/SM/361-DEV/2652-GA/10668, 6 December 2007.

[4] ECOSOC/6275, 2 July 2007.

[5] DPB, 11 January 2008; ECOSOC/6313, 2008 Organizational Session, 1st Meeting (PM), 14 January 2008; DPB, 4 April 2008.

development assistance (ODA) in 2007 had a shortfall of $10 billion, and total net aid from the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development/Development Assistance Committee (OECD/DAC) countries amounted to only 0.28% of their combined gross national income, as opposed to the United Nations target of 0.7%.[6]

The 2008 MDGs Report showed that strong and sustained progress in reducing extreme poverty achieved worldwide was being undercut by higher prices, particularly of food and oil, and the global economic slowdown. The Report confirmed that the number of people living in extreme poverty had fallen—from 1.8 to 1.4 billion—between 1990 and 2005, and that the 1990 global poverty rate was likely to be halved by 2015. But many of the eight MDGs and linked targets were in danger of going unmet by the deadline year of 2015 without redoubled efforts, sustained favourable international environment and increased donor support. The Secretary-General called for a special high-level meeting of the General Assembly to boost global action to achieve the MDGs. The world leaders were expected to announce a number of new initiatives and broaden coalitions to address health, poverty, food and climate change issues.[7]

In 2009, the financial and economic crisis, the food crisis, the climate crisis and the influenza pandemic had combined to call into question progress towards achieving the MDGs. There were concerns that an international financial and economic crisis would impact the major goals and projects of the United Nations, particularly the development pillars. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon wrote a letter to the G-20 leaders asking them to deliver $1.1 trillion they had pledged in April 2008 in the London G-20 summit meeting, and especially $50 billion for the poorest countries.[8]

Amid mixed progress towards the Goals and new crises threatening the global effort to halve extreme poverty, the Secretary-General made 2010 the year of the MDGs. He urged Heads of State and Government to attend the MDGs Summit in September, a crucially important

[6] Press Conference by United Nations Secretary-General to launch Report of the MDG Gap Task Force, 4 September 2008. See also *Delivering on the Global Partnership for Achieving the Millennium Development Goal, MDG Gap Task Force Report 2008* (New York: United Nations, 2008), accessed 19 June 2018, http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/pdf/MDG%20Gap%20Task%20Force%20Report%202008.pdf.

[7] DEV/2677, 11 September 2008.

[8] DSG/SM/469-DEV/2761, 16 September 2009; SG/SM/12458/Rev.1, 17 September 2009.

opportunity to redouble efforts to meet the Goals by the agreed deadline of 2015. The MDGs Report 2010 showed a mix of progress and obstacles in reaching the anti-poverty targets. The overall number of people living below the poverty line was half of what it had been in 1990, but that hunger and inequality were on the rise in many parts of the world.[9]

In September 2010, some 150 world leaders gathered in New York for the Summit on the MDGs. This was the most important global development conference since the Millennium Summit in 2000. The outcome document of the Summit had a crucial message, the MDGs were difficult and ambitious, but the Goals could be achieved. However, with only five years left, there was some scepticism whether these MDGs could be achieved, when not much was achieved for ten years. The outcome document provided very clear guidelines for each one of eight MDGs to accelerate their implementation in the last 5 years in the 15-year lifespan of the MDGs. The 2011 MDGs Report painted a mixed picture, on the one hand, it was clear that the MDGs had made a tremendous difference; they had raised awareness and they had shaped the broad vision for development work across the world, and they had fuelled action and meaningful progress in people's lives. Hundreds of millions had been lifted from poverty, more people had access to education and better health care. At the same time, progress had been uneven.[10]

The fourth report of the MDGs Gap Task Force showed that donor countries were still less than half way to fulfilling their pledge to devote 0.7% of gross domestic product (GDP) to development aid. Actual delivery in 2010 stood at only 0.32%—less than half the target. During the 2005 G-8 Summit in Gleneagles, Scotland, the world's leading industrialized countries had pledged a $50 billion increase in aid to poor nations by 2010. However, actual delivery had reached only $29 billion, a 42% shortfall.[11]

UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon made sustainable development a top priority for his second term, with only 2.5 years left to go before the end of 2015. The United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development

[9] SG/SM/12685-DEV/2785, 21 December 2009; Press Conference by Secretary-General to Launch MDGs Report 2010, 23 June 2010.

[10] SG/SM/13013-DEV/2805, 16 July 2010; SG/SM/13095, 13 September 2010; SG/SM/13694-ECOSOC/6487-DEV/2903, 7 July 2011.

[11] Press Conference to Launch MDGs Gap Task Force Report 2011, 16 September 2011.

(Rio+20) in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, was an excellent opportunity to renew political commitment for sustainable development and to define sustainable development goals (SDGs) with clear and measurable targets and indicators. These SDGs would be a central part of the post-2015 global development framework. The United Nations General Assembly requested that the Conference focus on two main themes: a green economy in the context of sustainable development and poverty eradication, and the institutional framework needed for sustainable development.[12]

Rio+20, held on 20–22 June 2012 in Rio de Janeiro, was the largest United Nations conference ever, with more than 50,000 people taking part over the 10 days of events leading up to and including the Conference. More than 100 Heads of State or Government were represented at the Conference. UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon urged delegates gathered in Rio de Janeiro to face an existential reality and to agree on a new blueprint to replace the old and broken model of economic and social advancement. Participants expressed hope that Rio would transform the mandate of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and strengthen the Economic and Social Council. Miloš Koterec of Slovakia, President of the United Nations Economic and Social Council, maintained that much had already been accomplished in the lead-up to the Conference. Astronauts from the International Space Station addressed the Conference and saluted its efforts to chart a course for the planet's future.[13]

Ban Ki-moon hailed the Rio+20 outcome document—"The Future We Want"—as a success and an important victory for multilateralism after months of difficult negotiations. The outcome document balanced the views of 193 United Nations Member States and recognized poverty as the greatest challenge to economic, social and environmental well-being. And the Member States agreed to launch a process to establish universal SDGs to build on the MDGs.[14]

[12]SG/SM/14087-ENV/DEV/1257, 30 January 2012; Press Conference by Non-Governmental Organizations on Rio+20, 1 June 2012; SG/SM/14336-ENV/DEV/1286, Press Conference by Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon on Rio+20, 6 June 2012; ENV/DEV/1292, 20 June 2012.

[13]ENV/DEV/1294, Conference on Sustainable Development Plenary, 1st and 2nd Meetings (AM and PM), 20 June 2012; ENV/DEV/1288, 13 June 2012.

[14]SG/SM/14387-GA/11260-ENV/DEV/1313, 28 June 2012.

Amid acclamations of the commitments announced at Rio, the MDG Gap Task Force 2012 report sub-titled "The Global Partnership for Development: Making Rhetoric a Reality" painted a troubling picture. Development gains worldwide risked backsliding due to the slowdown in providing aid. After peaking in 2010, ODA had declined in 2011 for the first time in many years, falling almost 3%. Unless that trend was reversed, fewer MDG targets would be met in fewer countries over the next three years, the report warned. According to the Task Force report, several countries sharply curtailed funding due to domestic fiscal austerity measures. The biggest shortfall involved the largest donors.[15]

In 2013, world leaders, major groups of civil society, including the private sector, embarked upon a discussion to devise a new development agenda for the post-2015 era. People from around the world had an opportunity to join the global conversation to shape the future development agenda by participating in an initiative known as MY World, giving the opportunity to weigh in on the priorities for the post-2015 development agenda.[16]

In April 2013, UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon launched the campaign "MDG Momentum - 1,000 Days of Action" to spur the momentum and achieve greater gains by the 2015 target date. In May 2013, the report, entitled "A New Global Partnership: Eradicate Poverty and Transform Economies through Sustainable Development," was issued by the High-level Panel on the Post-2015 Development Agenda, established by Ban Ki-moon. The report outlined five transformational shifts needed after 2015: leave no one behind; put sustainable development at the core; transform economies for jobs and inclusive growth; build peace and effective, open and accountable institutions for all; and forge a new global partnership. The report put sustainable development at the centre of the post-2015 development agenda and recognized peace and good governance as a core foundation for development.[17]

[15] Press Conference to Launch 'MDG Gap Task Force Report 2012,' 20 September 2012.

[16] SOC/4802, Economic and Social Council, Fifty-first Session 7th Meeting (AM), 8 February 2013; Press Conference on 'MY World' Initiative for Post-2015 Development Agenda, 12 March 2013.

[17] SG/SM/15229-AFR/2685-DEV/3016, 23 August 2013; Press Conference on Launch of Report on Post-2015 Development Agenda, 30 May 2013; SG/SM/15065-DEV/2991, 30 May 2013.

Over thirteen years, the United Nations has spearheaded an unprecedented global conversation on the MDGs and the road ahead. The big picture on 13 years of the MDGs was encouraging, at the same time, there were some hard truths to face. The MDGs Gap Task Force Report 2013 reported that for the first time in a long while, ODA had fallen for two consecutive years in 2012. ODA had dropped 4% to $126 billion in 2012, after falling 2% in 2011.[18]

The General Assembly special event on the MDGs in September 2013 produced a clear road map for preparing the post-2015 development agenda. Member States also agreed to hold a summit in 2015 to launch an ambitious and transformative development agenda for the post-2015 era and committed to intensifying efforts to achieve the MDGs.[19]

2014 was the year to accelerate progress to reach the MDGs and to prepare the groundwork for a post-2015 development agenda, as well as prepare a legal agreement on climate change, all by the end of 2015.[20]

Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon launched the MDGs Report 2014 in July 2014, noting that many key targets had been met or were within reach, but achievements had been uneven between goals, among and within regions, and between population groups. Despite substantial progress towards achieving the MDGs, it had been unequal in and among countries. Plus, with 1 billion people living in hunger and poverty, the MDGs could not thrive.[21]

In the fall of 2014, Member States discussed a coherent and ambitious post-2015 development agenda. The political will of Member States to agree on the best possible outcome at the 2015 Summit was clearly visible. The proposed SDGs reflected an integrated, universal and transformative agenda. This agenda would build on the lessons learned from the MDGs to address the many and interlinked challenges the world faced.[22]

[18] SG/SM/15268, 10 September 2013; SG/SM/15069-AFR/2637-DEV/2993, 3 June 2013; Press Conference on Launch of 2013 MDGs Gap Task Force, 19 September 2013.

[19] DSG/SM/744-DEV/3066, 6 February 2014; DSG/SM/705-DEV/3038, 25 September 2013.

[20] DSG/SM/744-DEV/3066, 6 February 2014.

[21] ECOSOC/6636, Economic and Social Council, 2014 Substantive Session 31st and 32nd Meetings (AM, PM and Night), 7 July 2014.

[22] DSG/SM/794-DEV/3116, 11 September 2014.

The final stretch towards the closing of the MDGs started in September 2015. With the 2015 deadline approaching, the Secretary-General urged the General Assembly to make a final push to achieve the MDGs by the end of 2015. He urged Member States to agree on and launch a new development agenda and exhorted them to fulfill their repeated pledge to deliver a meaningful universal climate change agreement by the end of 2015.[23]

On 4 December 2014, the Secretary-General presented his Synthesis Report on the Post-2015 Development Agenda, entitled "The Road to Dignity by 2030: Ending Poverty, Transforming All Lives and Protecting the Planet," to the Member States. The Report reviewed the lessons of the MDGs and discussed the contours of a universal and transformative agenda. The Report presented an integrated set of the following "Essential Elements": dignity, people, prosperity, our planet, justice and partnership. 2014, thus laid the groundwork for a set of SDGs and the resources needed to achieve them with the opportunity to chart a new era of sustainable development.[24]

On 16 January 2015, the United Nations began a seminal year, which should kick-start a new era of sustainability for all humankind. The General Assembly adopted the outcome document on the post-2015 development agenda to be adopted by consensus at the United Nations summit in September 2015. Member States faced the extraordinary opportunity and the responsibility to adopt an inspiring set of SDGs and to make sure that they are adequately financed.[25]

UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon presented the United Nations MDGs Report 2015, the final assessment of progress since the establishment of the MDGs, in July 2015. He observed that the Goals helped to lift more than 1 billion people out of extreme poverty, made major inroads against hunger and enabled more than 2.6 billion people to gain access to an improved drinking water source. The developing regions as a whole achieved the target to eliminate gender disparity in primary, secondary and tertiary education. At the same time, progress has not reached everyone. Too many people have been left behind. Moreover,

[23] DSG/SM/798, 22 September 2014; SG/SM/16138-GA/11545, 11 September 2014.

[24] DPB, 4 December 2014; SG/SM/16396-GA/11596-DEV/3155, 4 December 2014; SG/SM/16430, 17 December 2014.

[25] GA/11611, Sixty-ninth session, 78th Meeting (AM), 16 January 2015; SG/SM/16471-DEV/3162, 19 January 2015.

other dangers have intensified. Climate change became an existential peril, environmental degradation was undermining development gains, and both were affecting poor people the most.[26]

On 2 August 2015, the 193 Member States of the United Nations reached agreement on the outcome document for the new sustainable development agenda to be adopted in September by world leaders at the Sustainable Development Summit in New York. Concluding a negotiating process spanning more than two years, countries agreed to an ambitious agenda that featured 17 new SDGs aimed to end poverty, promote prosperity and people's well-being while protecting the environment by 2030. The outcome document had at its core poverty eradication as the overarching goal of the new development agenda. Member States stressed that the desired transformations would require a departure from "business as usual" and that intensified international cooperation on many fronts would be required. It was expected that the consensus reached on the outcome document would provide momentum for the negotiations on a new binding climate change treaty to culminate at the Climate Change Conference in Paris.[27]

Ban Ki-moon highlighted the outcome document of the post-2015 development agenda, called "Transforming our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development," as a road map to ending global poverty, building a life of dignity for all and leaving no one behind, a "to-do" list for people and the planet. The SDGs and the new Global Agenda were a fitting tribute on the seventieth anniversary of the United Nations Charter. The Secretary-General observed that this generation could be the first generation that could end global poverty, and the last generation that could prevent the worst impacts of global warming before it was too late.[28]

In a historic move, on 25 September 2015, all 193 Member States officially adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development with the 17 SDGs defining the world of sustainable growth. 154 Heads of State or Government and 30 Ministers came to New York for the SDGs summit. Pope Francis also came to address the General Assembly to give voice to the moral imperative of climate action. Ban Ki-moon welcomed the adoption of the 2030 Agenda, including its 17 SDGs, as a triumph of multilateralism, inclusiveness and universality. However,

[26] SG/SM/16914-ECOSOC/6709-DEV/3180, 6 July 2015.

[27] GA/11667-ENV/DEV/1543, 2 August 2015.

[28] SG/SM/16987-GA/11669-ENV/DEV/1545, 3 August 2015.

he cautioned, words would need to become deeds. Implementation would be the litmus test of the new agenda. According to UN Deputy Secretary-General Jan Eliasson, achieving the SDGs would be a monumental task. Every country had poverty and inequalities to address. Every country had environmental problems to remedy. Different countries had different challenges. That is why the sharing of lessons, experiences and challenges would be invaluable for all, including the United Nations.[29]

In July 2016, UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon launched the first SDGs report. The 2016 SDGs report provided an evaluation of where the world stood on the 17 Goals. The data showed that about one person in eight still lived in extreme poverty. Nearly 800 million people suffered from hunger and some 1.1 billion people were living without electricity.[30]

Under the Chinese presidency, the Sustainable Development Agenda became an official action agenda of the Group of 20 (G-20). At the G-20 summit in Hangzhou, in September 2016, the Group mainstreamed the 2030 Agenda into the G-20 Action Plan. UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon commended the G-20 for its leadership in supporting the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and other global agreements.[31]

Development was one of the fundamental objectives for the United Nations during Ban Ki-moon's tenure in office. He made it one of his priorities and he was actively involved in all aspects of the implementation of the MDGs and in the push for the adoption of the SDGs, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, a universal, integrated and transformative plan of action for peace and prosperity for all on a healthy planet. If development was perhaps the most important of the issues Ban Ki-moon had to deal with, it was by no means the only one in which he was equally involved. Development could not be met without strict attention to climate change. The climate change challenge was another issue to which the UN paid much attention. Ban Ki-moon used his "bully pulpit" to rally world leaders into the climate action, where, he believed, the United Nations could play its role to the full.[32]

[29] SG/SM/17106-ENV/DEV/1563, 24 September 2015; SG/SM/17152-ENV/DEV/1583, 29 September 2015; SG/SM/17857-DEV/3236, 16 June 2016; DSG/SM/993-ECOSOC/6786, 18 July 2016.

[30] SG/SM/17938-ECOSOC/6789-ENV/DEV/1690, 19 July 2016.

[31] SG/SM/18030-ENV/DEV/1702, 5 September 2016; SG/SM/18088-ENV/DEV/1709, 19 September 2016.

[32] Press conference on "Confronting Climate Change" Report, 27 February 2007; SG/SM/11108-GA/10608, 31 July 2007.

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CHAPTER 3

Climate Change: Future in Our Hands

> For my generation, coming of age at the height of the cold war, fear of a nuclear winter seemed the leading existential threat on the horizon. Today, the danger posed by war to all of humanity -- and to our planet -- is at least matched by the climate crisis and global warming.
>
> UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon[1]

Amid heightened concerns over, and growing awareness and acceptance of, the implications of global warming, United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon has put climate change at the top of his own agenda, next to development. He considered climate change a pressing global problem with a strong impact on international peace and security. Ban Ki-moon felt it was important to bring the question back to the United Nations process and back to the 1994 United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), where the interests of all parties could be addressed, and a solution could be found for post-2012. Therefore, the Secretary-General took leadership on the issue in order to generate necessary momentum. In fact, Ban Ki-moon's first address to the General Assembly as Secretary-General of the United Nations was addressed to the United Nations International School-United Nations Conference on global warming where he stated: "I am strongly committed to ensuring

[1] SG/SM/10893-ENV/DEV/914, 1 March 2007.

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M. Jesenský, *The United Nations under Ban Ki-moon*,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-12220-1_3

that the United Nations helps the international community make the transition to sustainable practices."[2]

The effects of climate change were being felt already: sea level rise, droughts and fewer crops. According to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), the world's temperature warmed by 0.74 °C during the last century and was likely to rise by 3 °C in the twenty-first century, unless measures were taken to reduce the rate of warming. The planet's warming was unequivocal, its impact was clearly noticeable, and it was beyond doubt that human activities had been contributing considerably to it. The IPCC projected that average temperature increases of more than 2–2.5 °C above the 1750 pre-industrial level would entail the risk of unmanageable impacts. Therefore, it was essential that the world agreed on a target of not exceeding 2–2.5 °C above the pre-industrial level.[3]

In 2007 the process of taking long-term action on climate change was at an impasse. Given the divergence of views, there had been relatively little progress towards shaping climate change policy after 2012. The UNFCCC set an overall framework for intergovernmental efforts to tackle the challenge posed by climate change. The Kyoto Protocol to the UNFCCC, adopted on 11 December 1997 and in force since 16 February 2005, aimed at reducing greenhouse gas emissions worldwide. The Protocol was an internationally and legally binding addition to UNFCCC, but its first commitment period was set to expire in 2012.[4]

Thus, the year 2007 seemed decisive. With the commitment period of the Kyoto Protocol set to end in 2012, Governments needed to conclude their negotiations by 2010 at the latest, to avoid a gap between the Kyoto Protocol's end and the entry into force of the new mechanism. Ban Ki-moon made clear his determination to see climate change and the climate issue as a key agenda for him personally and for the United Nations as a whole. Numerous countries had also recognized that urgent action was needed in line with suggestions of the scientific community.[5]

[2] Ibid.

[3] Press Conference on Climate Change, 16 January 2007; GA/10606-ENV/DEV/944, 30 July 2007; SC/9000, 5663rd Meeting (AM & PM), 17 April 2007; ENV/DEV/949, 17 September 2007; Press Conference on *Confronting Climate Change* Report, 27 February 2007.

[4] Press Conference on Climate Change, 16 January 2007.

[5] Press Conference on by Executive Secretary of UNFCCC, 20 March 2007.

"I have put climate change at the top of my own agenda," the Secretary-General informed a high-level gathering at Headquarters of environment and development leaders in May 2007. He stressed that climate change required sustained, concerted and high-level attention. To assist him in the effort and to explore prospects for advancing a multilateral solution, Ban Ki-moon appointed three Special Envoys of the Secretary-General for Climate Change: former Prime Minister of Norway, Gro Harlem Brundtland, former Chilean President, Ricardo Lagos Escobar and former Foreign Minister of the Republic of Korea, Han Seung-soo.[6]

In April 2007, the United Nations Security Council held its first-ever debate on the security implications of climate changes. The concept of international peace and security had been subject to an increasingly broader interpretation over the past few years. Even though it was difficult to quantify the relationship between climate change and international peace and security, there was widespread understanding that climate change was a pressing global challenge. Some speakers praised the initiative, but developing countries raised doubts over whether the Council was the proper forum to discuss the issue. They saw climate change as a development issue to be dealt with by the United Nations General Assembly.[7]

Secretary-General Ban-Ki-moon challenged Member States to take decisive action to tackle the climate change threat. He decided to minimize the UN system's own carbon footprint and to make the United Nations a climate neutral Organization through his "Greening the United Nations" initiative. Ban Ki-moon aimed to make the UN Headquarters a model for combating climate change and involve all United Nations agencies in transforming their facilities environmentally friendly.[8]

The General Assembly also considered how to translate the growing scientific consensus on climate change into a broad political consensus for action. The High-Level Event on Climate Change on 24 September 2007 in New York has been the largest-ever meeting of Heads of State and Government on climate change. World leaders, including 72 Heads of State or Government, expressed the political will to tackle climate change through concerted action. Subsequently, the Thirteenth Conference of Parties to the UNFCCC (COP-13) in Bali, Indonesia, in December 2007,

[6] ENV/DEV/935, Sustainable Development Commission, 9 May 2007.

[7] SC/9000, 5663rd Meeting (AM & PM), 17 April 2007.

[8] GA/10607, Informal Thematic Debate, 31 July 2007.

delivered agreement by all countries to launch negotiations on a new international climate change agreement by the end of 2009.[9]

Thus, in 2007 the threat of climate change moved to the centre of the global political arena. There was momentum for stronger global action, and recognition of the United Nations as the forum for reaching an agreement. With the climate change issue rising to the top of the global agenda, 2008 was the time to sustain the exceptional momentum.[10]

The COP 13 in Bali also contributed to rising momentum to minimize the UN's own carbon footprint and to make it a climate neutral Organization. The Secretary-General had requested all parts of the United Nations system to take steps to reduce their own carbon footprint. At Bali, formal negotiations were held in more casual attire. In the summer of 2008, Ban Ki-moon got under way his Cool UN Campaign at UN Headquarters. For the month of August, thermostats had been raised in most of the Secretariat building from 72 to 77 °F, and, from 70 to 75 °F in conference rooms. The UN Secretary-General led by example, he came to work wearing a short-sleeve shirt and no tie or jacket, as did many of his senior advisers.[11]

The Bali Conference increased political momentum and renewed hope that a new post-Kyoto Protocol climate change agreement would be finalized by December 2009. The COP-14 in Poznań, Poland, in December 2008, represented the halfway mark in the negotiations on an effective international response to climate change. It was the first time that a real negotiating text was on the table, pulling together the intergovernmental discussions on how to move forward on adaptation, mitigation, technology and finance.[12]

2009 was the year of climate change, the COP 13 in Bali established it as the deadline for a global deal. Climate change, the prominent geopolitical and economic issue of the twenty-first century, remained high on the international agenda despite the financial crisis in the United States and

[9]GA/10607, Informal Thematic Debate, 31 July 2007; SG/SM/11235-ENV/DEV/955, 24 October 2007; GA/10687, General Assembly Thematic Debate on Climate Change, 11 February 2008.

[10]Ibid.

[11]GA/10607, Informal Thematic Debate, 31 July 2007; ENV/DEV/999-HQ/665, 30 July 2008; DPB, 1 August 2008.

[12]DPB, 11 December 2008; SG/SM/11811-ENV/DEV/1006, 24 September 2008; Press Conference on Negotiations Towards Global Climate Change Agreement, 10 October 2008.

in the world. The G-8 talks in L'Aquila, Italy, featuring the world's largest emitters, recognized the scientific view that the global average temperature ought not to rise more than 2 °C above pre-industrial levels.[13] United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon pressed world leaders to cooperate on a just and scientifically sound solution: "we have the capacity, we have the technology, we have the financing, but simply because of a lack of political will, …we have not been able to agree on climate change."[14] He convened the day-long Summit on Climate Change in New York to mobilize the highest-level political momentum to reach an ambitious global climate deal in Copenhagen, Denmark, in December 2009. In total, 101 Heads of State and 163 Government officials recognized that climate change threat was serious, urgent and growing, and signalled their desire to achieve an agreed outcome in Copenhagen.[15]

In spite of that, the COP-15 in Copenhagen, with 119 world leaders, including those from the largest polluters, could not agree on a legally binding successor to the Kyoto Protocol. The outcome of the Conference, the Copenhagen Accord, marked a significant step towards the first truly global agreement to limit and reduce greenhouse gas emissions, but it did not go as far as some had hoped. Countries agreed on a goal of limiting global temperature rise to 2 °C or less, and, both developed and developing countries acknowledged their responsibility to limit or curb their emissions. There was also agreement on the need for a technology-transfer mechanism and developed countries committed $30 billion to support climate change action in developing countries over the next three years.[16]

Action on climate change had also been accompanied by an increasingly intense debate about climate change science and its public credibility. Controversies had erupted over the perceived impartiality of the IPCC and errors in its reports. The Panel acknowledged errors in projecting the rate of the disappearance of Himalayan glaciers in its

[13] Press Conference by Head of UNFCCC to Update Status of Negotiations, 14 May 2009; Press Conference on Climate Talks at G-8 Summit, 15 July 2009; Press Conference by Chairman of IPCC, 20 July 2009.

[14] SG/SM/12389, 29 July 2009.

[15] ENV/DEV/1069, Summit on Climate Change, AM & PM Meetings, 22 September 2009; Press Conference by Director of Secretary-General's Climate Change Support Team, 12 October 2009.

[16] SG/SM/12684-ENV/DEV/1104, 21 December 2009; DSG/SM/488-ENV/DEV/1112-REC/233, 19 February 2010.

fourth climate assessment of 2007. In March 2010, Ban Ki-moon and the IPCC commissioned the review from the InterAcademy Council, an international umbrella body for science academies. The overall conclusions maintained that the fundamental science on climate change remained sound and Ban Ki-moon continued to support the IPCC conclusions, which have been repeatedly upheld and endorsed by numerous professional review boards across the globe.[17]

In 2010 and 2011, the international community reached certain agreements in the context of the UNFCCC. These agreements provided an important, but incomplete, foundation for action on reducing greenhouse gas emissions.[18]

In July 2011, the Security Council held its second thematic debate on the impact of climate change on international peace and security. During the debate, in which some 65 speakers took the floor, delegates gave opposing views over whether the Council should consider climate change or leave it to other United Nations bodies. The Group of 77 developing countries and China argued that the links between climate change and development, and between security and development, had been explicitly recognized by the United Nations, but the possible security implications of climate change were far less obvious. At the same time, Nauru, speaking on behalf of the Pacific small island developing States, the Maldives, Seychelles and Timor-Leste, noted that many countries saw their survival threatened by the adverse impacts of climate change. In the end, the Security Council had been unable to find consensus on an outcome document from its meeting.[19]

Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon welcomed the debate of climate change in the Security Council. He argued that the debate of the "double-barrelled challenge" of climate change and international security was not only appropriate but essential. The Council could play a vital role in making clear the link between climate change, peace and security. It bore a unique responsibility for mobilizing national and international action to confront the security threat of climate change, and others that derived from it.[20]

[17] Press Conference by IPCC on Review of Procedures by InterAcademy Council, 30 August 2010; SG/SM/13077-ENV/DEV/1153, 30 August 2010.

[18] SG/SM/13712-SC/10333-ENV/DEV/1224, 20 July 2011.

[19] SC/10332, 6587th Meeting (AM & PM), 20 July 2011.

[20] Ibid.

In September 2011, the President of Palau in his statement to the opening of the UN General Assembly, launched an initiative to seek an advisory opinion from the International Court of Justice (ICJ) on the responsibilities of States under international law for damages from climate change. The initiative, proposed by some small island States and others, sought to ensure that activities carried out under their jurisdiction or control do not damage other States. The ICJ process could raise awareness of climate change, but this initiative had received only measured support. Although an interesting effort, Palau's initiative to bring the climate change issue before the ICJ as a security and human rights violation fell short.[21]

The first commitment period of the Kyoto Protocol, the only global legally binding treaty to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, expired in December 2012. Action on climate change remained unfinished business and efforts to reach a global climate framework to enter into force in 2012 did not materialize. The ultimate goal of a comprehensive and binding climate change agreement was momentarily beyond reach. Future commitments and actions on climate change remained delayed by negotiating gamesmanship. Grave economic troubles in many countries, political differences, conflicting priorities and strategies for responding to climate change lowered expectations for a breakthrough. At the COP-17 in Durban, South Africa, in December 2011, Member States agreed to reach a legally binding agreement by 2015. Governments remained committed to a more robust climate regime, but there was a need to increase political momentum towards a universal climate agreement in Paris in 2015.[22]

UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon called climate change the defining issue of our age demanding collaboration, cooperation and coalitions. It was not a distant threat; in 2012 the United Nations was flooded for the first time in 70 years. He called the world leaders to adapt to the changing situation. The United Nations has made a firm commitment to make all the United Nations systems carbon neutral by

[21] Press Conference on Request for ICJ Advisory Opinion on Climate Change, 3 February 2012; Press Conference on Impact of Climate Change on Marshall Islands, 15 February 2013.

[22] Press Conference on UNFCCC Conference in Durban, 1 December 2011; SG/SM/13996-ENV/DEV/1244, Secretary-General's Remarks to High-level Segment of Durban Climate Talks (COP-17), 6 December 2011; SG/SM/14550-ENV/DEV/1322, 27 September 2012; SG/SM/14696-ENV/DEV/1329, 4 December 2012; SG/SM/14708-ENV/DEV/1333, 10 December 2012.

2020. And, the last but not the least, Ban Ki-moon mobilized political will for a meaningful global legal climate agreement by 2015. The 2014 Climate Summit in New York marked the first time in five years that world leaders got together to chart a bold, new course of action on climate change. The Summit was an unprecedented mobilization, as more than 120 world's political, business, finance and civil society leaders have gathered to commit to action on climate change. Never before have so many leaders gathered to commit to action on climate change.[23]

The COP-20 in Lima, Peru, in December 2014 was built on the success of the Climate Summit and maintained the momentum towards Paris. The decisions adopted in Lima put in place the building blocks for a meaningful, universal climate change agreement and paved the way for its adoption in the upcoming twelve months.[24]

In 2015, the United Nations had three major priorities: completing the Millennium Development Goals, adopting a new set of sustainable development goals and concluding a new universal agreement on climate change. Ban Ki-moon argued the stars were aligned as never before. The world's two biggest emitters of greenhouse gases—the United States and China—have showed leadership and announced ambitious climate actions. The world's three biggest economies—China, the European Union and the United States—have placed their bets on low-carbon, climate-resilient growth. The encyclical by Pope Francis—*Laudato Sì*—defined climate change as a moral issue and a principal challenge facing humanity. If ever there were an issue that required unity of purpose, it was climate change.[25]

The pivotal twenty-first session of the Conference of the Parties (COP) to the UNFCCC, COP-21, in Paris, in December 2015, welcomed 150 world leaders. Never before have so many Heads of State and Government gathered in one place at one time with one common purpose. The leaders pledged their full support for a robust global climate agreement. The Paris Agreement on climate change agreed to hold

[23]SG/SM/15611-ECO/238-ENV/DEV/1407, 24 January 2014; SG/SM/16304-DEV/3140-EN/293, 2 November 2014; SG/SM/16186-ENV/DEV/1459, 23 September 2014; SG/SM/16190-ENV/DEV/1463, 23 September 2014.

[24]SG/SM/16423-ENV/DEV/1482, 14 December 2014; SG/SM/16430, 17 December 2014.

[25]SG/SM/16719-ENV/DEV/1512, 29 April 2015; SG/SM/16888-GA/11659-ENV/DEV/1534, 29 June 2015; SG/SM/17110-GA/11687, 25 September 2015; SG/SM/16710-ENV/DEV/1510, 28 April 2015.

global temperature rise to well below 2 °C and to pursue efforts to limit temperature increase to 1.5 °C. For the first time, every country in the world has pledged to curb their emissions, strengthen resilience and act internationally and domestically to address climate change.[26]

The 2015 Paris Agreement marked a watershed moment in taking action on climate change. Adopted by 195 parties to the UNFCCC, the Agreement called on countries to combat climate change and to accelerate and intensify the actions for a sustainable low carbon future and to adapt to the increasing impacts of climate change. The Agreement mandated regular meetings every five years, starting in 2018, to review progress and to consider how to strengthen it further.[27]

The Secretary-General felt that the iron needed to be struck while it was hot. There was an immense amount of enthusiasm after the Agreement was reached in Paris. Ban Ki-moon wanted to capitalize on this momentum and ensure the Paris Agreement be entered into as soon as possible. It was no secret that he would very much like to see the Agreement come into force before the end of his term in December 2016.[28]

On 22 April 2016, the United Nations made history when 175 countries signed in New York the Paris Agreement on climate change. Never before have so many countries signed an international agreement in one day. The Paris Agreement entered into force on 4 November 2016, 30 days after 55 countries, representing 55% of global emissions, deposited their instruments of ratification, acceptance or accession with the Secretary-General. The early entry into force of the Agreement accelerated efforts to limit global temperature rise to well below 2 °C, and to build climate resilience. UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon applauded the entry into force as testament to the urgency for action, and reflection of the consensus of Governments that robust global cooperation was essential to meet the climate challenge.[29]

The COP-22, in Marrakech, Morocco, opened just three days after the Paris Agreement came into force. 109 countries had already ratified

[26] SG/SM/17396-ENV/DEV/1614, 7 December 2015; SG/SM/17412-ENV/DEV/1622, 12 December 2015; SG/SM/17417-GA/11743-ENV/DEV/1623, 15 December 2015.

[27] ENV/DEV/1713-L/T/4454, 21 September 2016.

[28] DPB, 13 September 2016.

[29] SG/SM/17738, 9 May 2016; ENV/DEV/1713-L/T/4454, 21 September 2016; SG/SM/18179-ENV/DEV/1729, 5 October 2016.

the Agreement, highlighting a new dawn for global cooperation on climate change. A few days later, the outcome of the presidential elections in the United States has cast some doubt over the future course of action. The United States has played an indispensable leadership role in moving forward towards the entry into force of the Paris Agreement. With the new administration, there was a very good chance that the United States would review its role even though it was the second largest polluter in the world.[30]

The 2015 Paris Agreement marked the great "multilateral moment"—a time for all nations, all people, to come together in common cause in the name of our global humanity. One of the most complex, ambitious and far-reaching visions ever reached by the United Nations and the international community, it signalled perhaps a shift towards a new era of global cooperation on climate change.[31]

UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon has played the major role in rallying world leaders around the need to tackle climate change. He has never missed the COP to the UNFCCC during his 10 years in office. The Secretary-General has visited the Antarctic and Arctic, the Brazilian rainforest and the drylands of Mongolia. In keeping with the Secretary-General's activism, UN Headquarters has started the "Cool UN" initiative to demonstrate the Organization's commitment to using energy wisely. The issue of climate change had taken centre stage at the United Nations under Ban Ki-moon's watch. The Organization's and its Secretary-General's involvement as a driver of the climate change issue was proof of why the United Nations was far from redundant and could be more relevant than ever before.[32]

Climate change and sustainable development were two global challenges requiring a multilateral response and global mobilization. The outbreak of Ebola in West Africa in 2014 exposed the links between global challenges of sustainable social and economic development, environment and health care. The crisis was by no means exclusively a health issue. Ebola became a global threat which required urgent global efforts

[30]DPB, 9 November 2016; DPB, 14 November 2016.

[31]SG/SM/14011-SOC/4784, 12 December 2011.

[32]SG/SM/18279-ENV/DEV/1755, 18 November 2016; SG/SM/15087-ENV/DEV/1362, 7 June 2013; DPB, 10 June 2013; "Climate Change: How It Impacts Us All," DPI/NGO Conference, NGO/624-PI/1792, 5 September 2007.

in solidarity with the affected countries. The situation was an unusual challenge for the world and it called for an exceptional response. One of the most serious health challenges ever faced by the UN, it was also growingly a humanitarian, developmental and security crisis. Ban Ki-moon used his convening power to mobilize the whole UN System for action as the outbreak was becoming a real test of multilateralism.[33]

[33] DSG/SM/792, 2 September 2014.

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CHAPTER 4

Ebola Virus: A Test of Multilateralism

> An active outbreak. A rising death toll. An exponential infection curve. And perhaps, above all, uncertainty and mounting fear. What would tomorrow bring? Our Organization faced a fundamental test of our collective strength and will - and we mobilized.
>
> UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon[1]

The Ebola epidemic began in West Africa in December 2013. When 2-year-old Emile Ouamouno from Guinea contracted Ebola and died on 28 December 2013, little did anyone realize that it would set off a human tragedy that would take more than 11,000 lives, create worldwide fear and require the mobilization of a multibillion dollar global response. Ebola was an old disease in a new context. The outbreak was the largest, longest and most complex seen in the 40 years of existence of the World Health Organization (WHO). A lack of basic surveillance capacities in West Africa meant that the virus initially spread undetected for three months.[2]

In the spring of 2014, the outbreak of Ebola virus disease dramatically affected countries in West Africa. Many national health workers lost their lives. Others, also working for organizations such as *Medécins Sans*

[1] SG/SM/17454-GA/11752, 13 January 2016.

[2] A/70/723, Protecting Humanity from Future Health Crises, Report of the High-level Panel on the Global Response to Health Crises, 25 January 2016, p. 4.; ibid., p. 7; ECOSOC/6653, 2015 Session, 3rd Meeting, 5 December 2014.

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M. Jesenský, *The United Nations under Ban Ki-moon*,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-12220-1_4

Frontières and the International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent, were risking their lives. Ebola spread through direct contact with the blood or body fluids of a contaminated person. Transmission was unlikely to occur through water, food or airborne contact, and a person infected with the virus was not contagious until symptoms appeared.[3]

The outbreak appeared to have been under control in May 2014, but new cases emerged in new countries in June 2014, starting a subregional crisis. By August 2014, the WHO reported more than 1500 deaths and more than 3500 confirmed cases in Guinea, Sierra Leone, Liberia and Nigeria. This was the largest, the most severe and most complex Ebola outbreak ever seen in the nearly 40-year history of the disease.[4]

The WHO explained the heavy toll of cases and casualties by the fact that neither doctors nor the public in the region were familiar with the disease. Moreover, several infectious diseases endemic in the region, like malaria, typhoid fever and Lassa fever, mimicked the initial symptoms of Ebola. Once the Ebola virus was identified and proper protective measures were put in place, cases among medical staff have dropped dramatically.[5]

On 9 August 2014, Margaret Chan, Director General of the WHO, declared a global emergency. Three days later, United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon appointed Dr. David Nabarro as UN System Coordinator for Ebola Virus Disease. The United Nations system assigned the central role in control of the outbreak to the WHO.[6]

On 2 September 2014, Margaret Chan, David Nabarro, and UN Deputy Secretary-General Jan Eliasson, briefed the Member States on the situation on Ebola. The situation was an unusual challenge for the world and it called for an exceptional response. This was one of the most serious health challenges ever faced by the UN. This was not only a health crisis; it was also growingly a humanitarian, developmental and security crisis. The whole UN System mobilized for action and the outbreak was becoming a test of multilateralism. Ebola became a global

[3] SG/A/1499, 25 August 2014; DPB, 25 August 2014; DSG/SM/815-IHA/1346, 10 October 2014.

[4] SC/11566, 7268th Meeting, 18 September 2014; DSG/SM/792, 2 September 2014.

[5] DPB, 26 August 2014.

[6] SG/A/1499, 25 August 2014; DPB, 25 August 2014.

threat which required urgent global efforts in solidarity with the affected countries.[7]

Immediately, there was a real need to improve understanding of the issue in order to mobilize societies. The trend of limitations on flights was having adverse effects on efforts to control the disease. The flight restrictions hindered the capacities of aid organizations like *Médecins Sans Frontières* to deploy their personnel and contributed to the economic and diplomatic isolation of the affected countries and further compounded the stigmatization already experienced.[8]

The WHO was criticized for reacting too slowly to the outbreak. However, the WHO was not the first responder, governments were the primary providers of care. The WHO was a central specialized health agency at the United Nations System, but it provided guidance and technical advice on the invitation and at the request of Government.[9]

Ebola was not just a health crisis; it had grave humanitarian, economic and social consequences. Although only a few countries have been affected, the outbreak in West Africa was critically serious and deeply worrying. For the United Nations, this was one of the most serious challenges the Organization had ever faced. Ban Ki-moon established a United Nations System Ebola virus disease coordination mechanism to ensure integrated support to affected countries.[10]

By early September 2014, it was apparent that the response was falling behind. The disease was advancing at an exponential pace and the number of cases was doubling every three weeks. More than 5500 people had been infected and far more than 2500 had died. The Ebola crisis had evolved into a complex emergency, with significant political, social, economic, humanitarian and security dimensions.[11]

Ban Ki-moon renewed his calls for countries to refrain from closing their borders to people coming from Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone.

[7] DSG/SM/792, 2 September 2014.

[8] DSG/SM/815-IHA/1346, 10 October 2014; DPB, 25 August 2014. Ebola affected individuals displaying symptoms of the infection could be identified before boarding airplanes and prevented from travelling. Ibid.

[9] DSG/SM/792, 2 September 2014.

[10] Ibid.

[11] DSG/SM/791, 2 September 2014; DSG/SM/792, 2 September 2014; SC/11566, 7268th Meeting, 18 September 2014; SG/SM/16154-SC/11567, 18 September 2014.

He activated the United Nations crisis response mechanism for managing a system wide crisis and instructed all United Nations heads of agencies and departments to give top priority to working together in support of a unified, effective response. The Secretary-General made the United Nations the centre for action in responding to the outbreak, believing the UN needed to meet this test of international cooperation and solidarity.[12]

Only twice in its history the Security Council discussed the security implications of a public health issue, in both cases on the AIDS epidemic. On 18 September 2014, the Security Council determined that the unprecedented extent of the Ebola outbreak in Africa constituted a threat to international peace and security. The Council adopted resolution 2177 (2014), co-sponsored by 130 countries, the most ever, unanimously.[13]

The Secretary-General proposed the establishment of the United Nations Mission for Ebola Emergency Response (UNMEER), an emergency health mission, to stop the outbreak, treat the infected, ensure essential services, preserve stability and prevent further outbreaks. Ban Ki-moon appointed Anthony Banbury as his Special Representative and Head of the Mission. It was hoped the UNMEER could turn things around for the estimated 22 million people in the hardest-hit countries. The gravity of the situation was compounded by the fact that Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone, the three most affected countries, had one of the lowest numbers of health workers per capita in the world.[14]

On 19 September 2014, the General Assembly unanimously adopted resolution 69/1, asking the Secretary-General to promptly establish the UNMEER. The Mission would be based in Accra, Ghana, and would provide a platform for wide-ranging international efforts.[15]

Following the historic meeting of the Security Council and with the unanimous adoption of General Assembly resolution 69/1, UNMEER advance teams deployed to the mission headquarters in Ghana and to Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone. The Mission relied on the support of

[12] SG/SM/16150, 16 September 2014.

[13] SC/11566, 7268th Meeting, 18 September 2014; SG/SM/16154-SC/11567, 18 September 2014.

[14] SC/11566, 18 September 2014; DPB, 19 September 2014.

[15] GA/11552, Sixty-ninth General Assembly, Plenary, 3rd Meeting, 19 September 2014; SG/SM/16161-GA/11553, 19 September 2014.

the entire United Nations system, in particular the WHO, and worked closely with Member States, regional organizations, civil society and the private sector.[16]

The UNMEER had deployed just 10 days after the Secretary-General's call for a stepped-up response. The African Union Peace and Security Council had established the African Union Support for Ebola in West Africa (ASEOWA). The Union's initiative liaised and collaborated with the United Nations, WHO, the United States Centre for Disease Control, Red Cross and other organizations, as well as with Cubans and Chinese with whom the African Union worked inside Ebola treatment units.[17]

With the Ebola virus still claiming 200 lives daily, the Secretary-General convened on 25 September 2014 a High-level Meeting on Response to the Ebola Virus Disease Outbreak. The summit brought together global leaders to mobilize an exceptional international response to contain and stop the spread of Ebola Virus Disease. The meeting rallied the international community to swiftly ramp up the response to ensure essential services, preserve stability and prevent outbreaks in other countries.[18]

Even as the international community scaled up its response, the situation in Guinea, Liberia, and Sierra Leone continued to deteriorate. Capacity for case management in these three most affected countries remained far short of requirements. Guinea had 61% of the required bed capacity in Ebola treatment units, Liberia only 23% and Sierra Leone 29%.[19]

In November 2014, the Ebola crisis exceeded a grim milestone of 5000 confirmed deaths. At the same time, there was also the first good news, the worst-case scenario of sustained exponential increases in victims did not materialize. Nevertheless, the crisis was serious. Beyond the death and infection tolls in the countries of West Africa, Ebola had also far-reaching implications on economy, education and sanitation. The outbreak had begun to erode economic growth and to reverse the

[16] SG/SM/16162, 19 September 2014.

[17] SC/12006, 7502nd Meeting, 13 August 2015.

[18] SG/2207, 25 September 2014, High-Level Meeting on Response to Ebola Virus Disease Outbreak; Note No. 6423, 23 September 2014.

[19] DPB, 9 October 2014; DSG/SM/815-IHA/1346, 10 October 2014; SC/11601, 7279th Meeting, 14 October 2014; DPB, 23 October 2014; DPB, 6 November 2014; SC/11644, 7310th Meeting, 12 November 2014.

peacebuilding gains in the hardest-hit countries, Liberia, Guinea and Sierra Leone.[20]

In December 2014, UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon travelled to Guinea, Liberia, Mali and Sierra Leone, the four countries most affected by the Ebola outbreak, as well as to Ghana, where UNMEER headquarters was located. Ban Ki-moon's visit showed solidarity of the United Nations with the Governments, communities and people affected by the Ebola outbreak.[21]

In mid-January 2015, David Nabarro, the Special Envoy for Ebola Response, noted progress in the fight to counter the spread of the disease. Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone showed, for the first time, signs of improvement. The numbers of cases per day had declined from 150 per day in September 2014 to about 50 in January 2015.[22]

While the situation was far from the target of zero infections, it appeared that the tide might be turning. Liberia, the worst-affected country, has seen dramatic improvements. Sierra Leone has also reduced incidence and Guinea kept the numbers of people with Ebola comparatively low. Massive support from the international community began to make a difference.[23]

Mid-February 2015 was a critical turning point in the Ebola crisis. 2015 saw a significant decline in the number of new Ebola cases in Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone. The UNMEER and local, national, regional and international activities have succeeded in averting the worst-case scenario of sustained exponential increases in victims.[24]

The efforts to end the Ebola outbreak in West Africa reached an important milestone on 9 May 2015. After 42 days with no cases, the WHO declared Liberia Ebola-free, a remarkable success for what was previously the worst-affected country. While Liberia was now Ebola-free, it was still untimely to celebrate victory. As long as there were Ebola cases in any country in the region, all countries were at risk.[25]

[20]GA/11854, Sixty-ninth session, Meeting on Ebola, 13 November 2014; SC/11663, 7318th Meeting, 21 November 2014; DPB, 4 December 2014; ECOSOC/6653, 2015 Session, 3rd Meeting, 5 December 2014.

[21]SG/SM/16430, 17 December 2014; SG/SM/16473-GA/11612, 20 January 2015.

[22]DPB, 16 January 2015.

[23]SG/SM/16473-GA/11612, 20 January 2015.

[24]DPB, 18 February 2015; SG/SM/16536-GA/11621, 18 February 2015.

[25]SG/SM/16814-GA/11650, 2 June 2015.

The Ebola crisis exposed the underlying fragility of West Africa and its impact has been far-reaching. The outbreak has eroded progress on peace and development. It has affected health, social and educational services, agriculture, mining, trade, tourism, transport, fisheries and livestock. All these disruptions have had a negative impact on the economies of Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone. Regional approach to recovery from the Ebola crisis was key in that context. Resumption of cross-border trade, return of international flights and economic stimulus were vital to cementing stability in West Africa.[26]

The United Nations and the WHO needed to learn from the Ebola outbreak. It was necessary to translate lessons learned from this outbreak into stronger national and international systems to prevent and respond to health crises. UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon appointed a High-Level Panel on the Global Response to Health Crises. The Panel reviewed how to strengthen national and international systems to prevent and manage future health crises. Ban Ki-moon appealed to Member States to end the Ebola outbreak in West Africa and support Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone in returning to a path of sustainable development.[27]

As the Ebola crisis was not yet over, the United Nations system continued to support Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone in getting to and staying at zero cases. However, the UNMEER has principally achieved its core objective of scaling up the response on the ground and establishing unity of purpose among responders in support of the nationally led efforts. Therefore, the UNMEER closed on 31 July 2015, and as of 1 August, the WHO assumed the oversight of the UN system's Ebola emergency response.[28]

In August 2015, a wide-spread consensus emerged that the dramatic situation of September 2014 was over. Margaret Chan, the Director General of the WHO, called it a "night-and-day" difference for Liberia, Guinea and Sierra Leone. She predicted that Ebola could be defeated by the end of 2015 if the intensity of case detection and contact tracing was sustained.[29]

[26] SC/11882, 7438th Meeting (PM), 5 May 2015; SG/SM/16928, 10 July 2015.

[27] SG/SM/16814-GA/11650, 2 June 2015; SG/SM/16928, 10 July 2015.

[28] DPB, 31 July 2015; SG/SM/16982, 31 July 2015.

[29] SC/12006, 7502nd Meeting, 13 August 2015.

On 3 September 2015, the WHO once again declared Liberia free of Ebola virus transmission in the human population. The transmission had been declared over in May, but the disease had re-emerged. Liberia entered a 90-day period of heightened surveillance. Sierra Leone declared the end of Ebola transmission on 7 November 2015 and Guinea marked this milestone on 29 December 2015. Thus, in January 2016, for the first time since the Ebola outbreak started, West Africa was on the cusp of being declared free of Ebola virus transmission in the human population.[30]

Finally, on 14 January 2016, the WHO announced the end of Ebola transmission in Liberia. Accordingly, for the first time since the devastating Ebola outbreak began, all known chains of transmission of Ebola in West Africa have been stopped and no new cases have been reported since the end of November 2015. Nevertheless, Guinea, Liberia, Sierra Leone, and in fact the entire region, needed to maintain intensive observation to detect and respond to any new flare-ups of Ebola.[31]

The end of Ebola transmission in West Africa was testament to multilateralism's potential in bringing the international community to work alongside national Governments. General Assembly resolution 70/183 acknowledged the key role of the WHO in dealing with outbreaks and emergencies with health consequences and requested it to provide reports on the state of health security. The launch of the Sustainable Development Goals in September 2015 was a timely reminder of the critical need to build strong basic health systems and community resilience.[32]

The Ebola outbreak that began in West Africa in December 2013 was the largest epidemic of the disease ever recorded. Ebola virus disease was responsible for the death of more than 11,000 people in Guinea, Liberia, and Sierra Leone, and affected seven additional countries. The United Nations faced a fundamental test of collective strength and will. The Ebola emergency led to the deployment of foreign military forces from several countries, as well as the first-ever United Nations emergency health mission, the UNMEER.[33] The Security Council resolution

[30] DPB, 3 September 2015; SG/SM/17454-GA/11752, 13 January 2016.

[31] SG/SM/17456-AFR/3302, 14 January 2016.

[32] SG/SM/17118, 26 September 2015; SG/SM/17454-GA/11752, 13 January 2016.

[33] SG/SM/17454-GA/11752, 13 January 2016; A/69/21, Implementation of the International Health Regulations (2005), Report of the Review Committee on the Role of the International Health Regulations (2005) in the Ebola Outbreak and Response, 13 May 2016, para. 1.

2177 (2014) declared Ebola a threat to international peace and security, helped to galvanize international support for the affected countries and the crisis served as a wake-up call for increased global action to prevent future health crises. In April 2015, the UN Secretary-General established the High-level Panel on the Global Response to Health Crises to propose recommendations to respond effectively to future health crises. In January 2016, the Panel recommended a series of measures to strengthen the global health architecture to better address the threat of pandemics.[34]

The outbreak of Ebola in West Africa challenged the international community in unprecedented ways. The Ebola crisis evolved into a complex emergency, with significant political, social, economic, humanitarian and security dimensions. The emergency helped as a reminder to the international community to work alongside national Governments. It shifted focus on the regional crises with an impact on global security and multilateral diplomacy. The two countries in Africa in particular, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) and Sudan, remained a source of grave concern. The ramifications of events occurring on their territories had an impact on the whole continent, but an effective international response strategy, could make Sudan and the DRC the natural poles of stability in their troubled regions of Africa.[35]

[34]SC/12006, 7502nd Meeting, 13 August 2015; Protecting Humanity from Future Health Crises, Report, 25 January 2016, p. 6. Accessed 29 August 2017 at http://www.un.org/News/dh/infocus/HLP/2016-02-05_Final_Report_Global_Response_to_Health_Crises.pdf; Ibid., p. 4.

[35]SG/SM/17454-GA/11752, 13 January 2016.

PART II

The Regional Impact on Global Security

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CHAPTER 5

DRC: Enormous and Complex Expectations

> …I come now, in recognition of the importance of the Democratic Republic of the Congo to peace, stability and development in Africa.
>
> UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon[1]

The Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) is as large as Western Europe and has nine neighbours. In 2001, the DRC had been Africa's world war, with nine foreign armies in it. By 2007 the country had made spectacular progress, rising to the challenge of ending the conflict and holding its first democratic elections since 1960. Challenges remained, however, and the international community's continued support was crucial.[2]

It was difficult to overemphasize the significance of the country. The United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo (MONUC) was the largest and most expensive UN peacekeeping operation in the world, with thousands of troops and over 100 aircraft. The elections held in July and October 2006 were the largest electoral exercise the UN had ever supported. The elections resulted in the establishment of the first democratically elected national institutions in over four decades and the inauguration of President Joseph Kabila, the first Congolese President elected by direct universal suffrage. The DRC was

[1] SG/SM/12982-AFR/2005, 30 June 2010.

[2] DSG/SM/317, 1 May 2007; SG/SM/10859-AFR/1492, 30 January 2007; SC/8936, 5616th Meeting (AM), 9 January 2007.

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M. Jesenský, *The United Nations under Ban Ki-moon*,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-12220-1_5

beginning a new phase with the establishment of democratically elected institutions. As the spearhead of the African renaissance, the DRC could play its role as a central and pivotal State in strategies aimed at stabilizing the Great Lakes region.[3]

The establishment of the new Government offered an opportunity for the DRC to normalize relations with neighbouring States. At a December 2006 summit held in Nairobi, 11 countries of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR) reached the Pact on Security, Stability and Development in the Great Lakes region, designed to bring peace and prosperity. The situation in the Great Lakes region, described as a tragedy only a few years previously, had improved greatly. Almost all countries in the region had successfully emerged from conflict and there had been a steady progress in the areas of peace, security and democratization. Notwithstanding all these positive developments, prospects for the future continued to be overshadowed by long-standing security challenges from the militias and armed groups in the eastern DRC, such as the *Forces Démocratiques de Libération du Rwanda* (FDLR), ex-FAR/Interahamwe and the dissident militia of Laurent Nkunda. Steps were urgently needed to resolve the problems presented by all foreign armed groups on Congolese soil, particularly FDLR. To address this problem, the DRC and other States in the region needed a common approach and close cooperation.[4]

UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon chose the DRC for his first official visit to Africa in January 2007. He acknowledged that the country represented a real source of hope for all of Africa. And yet, its enormous challenges required the hard work of its people and the support of the international community, led by the United Nations.[5]

On 9 November 2007, the governments of the DRC and Rwanda signed in Nairobi a joint communiqué on a common approach to end the threat posed by illegal armed groups in the eastern part of the DRC. Thereafter, at the Conference for Peace, Security and Development in North and South Kivu, held in Goma from 6 to 23 January 2008, the armed groups in North and South Kivu signed with the Government

[3] Ibid.

[4] SC/8996, 5660th Meeting (AM), 13 April 2007; SC/8968, 5637th Meeting (AM), 9 March 2007; SC/9213, 5814th Meeting (AM), 21 December 2007.

[5] SG/SM/10859-AFR/1492, 30 January 2007; SC/8936, 5616th Meeting (AM), 9 January 2007.

of the DRC the statements of commitment to observe a complete and immediate ceasefire and to begin the withdrawal of their forces.[6]

The MONUC was following up on the Nairobi and Goma agreements between the governments of the DRC and Rwanda on the one hand and armed groups on the other. While it was true that the Mission had the largest existing peacekeeping force, the DRC was vast. The Kivus alone were the size of Belgium, Luxembourg and the Netherlands combined, and Bas Congo, the smallest province, was the size of Belgium. Evidently, there were limits to what MONUC could do.[7]

In October 2008, fighting broke out in the eastern province of North Kivu, in its capital city of Goma, and in the district of Rutshuru, near the Rwandan border. The renewed fighting principally concerned the *Congrès national pour la défence du people* (CNDP) and the National Armed Forces or FARDC (the *Forces Armées de la République Démocratique du Congo*) in the Kivus; a resurgence of armed groups and subsequent clashes with FARDC in Ituri District; and new attacks by the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) in Orientale Province. MONUC was engaged on four fronts: North Kivu, South Kivu, Ituri, and Orientale. The United Nations had a total 17,000 troops in the DRC, a country the size of Western Europe. Orientale and Ituri provinces were the size of France, with no roads or infrastructure. Most of the 17,000 MONUC troops were in the east. In North Kivu, there were fewer than 6000 troops.[8]

When the ceasefire was restored, MONUC was patrolling the city of Goma in the face of a near-total collapse of local authority. Remnants of the FARDC were running amok through Goma, looting and firing. Ban Ki-moon commended MONUC troops and staff for professionally carrying out their duties under extremely difficult circumstances. He called on all parties to respect the ceasefire in Goma. MONUC had done its best to bring the situation under control but it was stretched to the limit. Goma was a city of 1 million people and the MONUC Mission had some 850 soldiers. As MONUC was the only organized force in the country, the Congolese people had very high expectations of peacekeepers. There was an impression that MONUC was capable of everything. Therefore,

[6] SC/9236, 5828th Meeting (PM), 30 January 2008.

[7] Press Conference by Alan Ross, Secretary-General's Special Representative for DRC (SR for DRC), 15 April 2008.

[8] Press Conference by Alan Ross, SR for DRC, 28 October 2008; SC/9596, 6083rd Meeting (PM), 17 February 2009.

there had been a perception in some cases that MONUC had not done enough.[9]

In November 2008, developments in the eastern part of the DRC had taken another turn for the worse. There had been heavy clashes between the CNDP and the FARDC north of Goma. The situation was deteriorating very fast and the humanitarian situation was becoming dire. On 20 November 2008, the Security Council authorized a temporary increase of the military strength of MONUC of up to 2785 military personnel, unanimously adopting resolution 1843 (2008).[10]

The crisis in North Kivu displaced another 250,000 people, some of them for the second or third time, in the eastern portion of the country. The crisis was fuelled by two factors: the nearly total lack of State authority and the abundant natural resources of eastern DRC. The events had a profound impact on MONUC, it was moving to boost its presence in North Kivu. By and large, without the presence of MONUC, the situation on the ground would most certainly be worse. But after 10 years, the Mission's mandate needed clarification. While it was the most significant United Nations peacekeeping operation, the problems in the DRC were undeniably colossal.[11]

Displaced people in North Kivu added some 250,000 new internally displaced persons created by that conflict since August 2008, in addition to a long-standing provincial caseload exceeding 800,000. Sexual violence, particularly by those with guns, continued to be a horrific feature of everyday life in the eastern DRC, and impunity remained a fundamental issue. The Government needed to establish proper control over its own natural riches and provide support and resources to its administration, and the authority and capacity of the country's central and local authorities had to be rebuilt at every level.[12]

The Government and the international community pursued new initiatives to search for a political solution to the conflict. The rapprochement between the DRC and Rwanda and to some extent Uganda made possible declarations by the CNDP and the Coalition of Congolese

[9]Press Conference by Kevin Kennedy, Head of the Great Lakes Integrated Operations Team, 30 October 2008; SG/SM/11901-AFR/1765, 31 October 2008.

[10]Press Conference by Edmond Mulet, Assistant Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, 7 November 2008; SC/9503, 6018th Meeting (AM), 20 November 2008.

[11]SC/9511, 6024th Meeting (AM), 26 November 2008.

[12]SC/9596, 6083rd Meeting (PM), 17 February 2009.

Patriotic Resistance (PARECO), followed by other Congolese armed groups, to integrate immediately into the Congolese army. On 23 March 2009, the Government and CNDP signed a peace accord laying the foundations for the incorporation of CNDP's parallel structures into the provincial and national security services. This introduced positive momentum in the eastern DRC and opened up new prospects for lasting peace.[13]

Between Christmas 2008 and mid-January 2009, the LRAs, the Uganda-based rebels, attacked in Orientale Province in retaliation for the joint operation by FARDC, the Uganda People Defence Force (UPDF) and the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA). LRA sowed terror and took revenge by looting, raping, maiming, abducting and killing civilians in a vast area stretching from northern Ituri to eastern Central African Republic. Altogether, about 1100 civilians had been killed, hundreds had been abducted and 200,000 had been displaced.[14]

As MONUC approached its tenth anniversary, the slide to war that had threatened the Great Lakes region in 2008 had been reversed. There was a real prospect of ending the violence plaguing the eastern DRC; however, stabilization of the troubled eastern provinces has been uneven, with some rebels being reintegrated into the national army while others continued to attack civilians. Threats and attacks continued in the North and South Kivu provinces and in Orientale Province. The total number of internally displaced persons in the DRC was estimated at 2.2 million, of whom an estimated 1.7 million people remained displaced in North and South Kivu. MONUC observed an increase in reported human rights violations perpetrated by foreign armed groups and also, at times, by Government security forces. The DRC authorities stressed the historic importance of MONUC, as the largest United Nations peacekeeping operation, which could finally put an end to the first African world war.[15]

MONUC's mandate, which concentrated almost all its military forces in the east and placed the highest priority on protecting civilians, posed a dilemma. It enjoined the Mission to work with the FARDC, which

[13] Press Conference by Secretary-General's Special Representative for DRC on Briefing to Security Council, 9 April 2009; SC/9631, 6104th Meeting (AM), 9 April 2009; SC/9596, 6083rd Meeting (PM), 17 February 2009.

[14] SC/9631, 6104th Meeting (AM), 9 April 2009.

[15] SC/9769, 6203rd Meeting (AM), 16 October 2009; SC/9785, 6215th Meeting (AM), 9 November 2009.

included elements responsible for human rights violations. Joint operations by the FARDC and the Rwandan military against the Hutu-dominated militia known as the Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda or FDLR (*Forces Démocratiques de Libération de Rwanda*), which continued to commit atrocities against civilians in the eastern DRC, had achieved military gains, but they were accompanied by a high humanitarian cost. In response to the Congolese-Rwandan actions, supported by MONUC, the FDLR rebels had carried out brutal reprisal attacks against the civilian population. Following charges of human rights abuses, including rape, by national army elements, MONUC screened and cleared the commanders of 18 national army battalions to participate in joint operations against rebels in the Kivus. In addition, the Council requested the Secretary-General to continue to fully investigate allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse by civilian and military personnel of MONUC, and to take appropriate measures.[16]

In 2010, the DRC was preparing to celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of its independence. President Joseph Kabila, emphasizing the need for the country to rely on its own capabilities, presented a timetable for MONUC's drawdown to be completed by June 2011. The Secretary-General recommended that the first stage of the drawdown should be initiated before 30 June 2010, followed by a review of the security situation in areas of the Mission's operation. He stressed that the United Nations had been a partner and friend of Congo, since its inception, and he was certain that relationship would continue as the country entered into a new era of sovereign independence. However, Ban Ki-moon disagreed with the Congolese Government's proposed date of August 2011 for the final withdrawal of the 11-year-old force.[17]

The United Nations urged President Joseph Kabila and his Government to consider the humanitarian consequences of terminating the MONUC Mission. Although the Congolese authorities were considering MONUC's departure, they had not presented an ultimatum. Finally, while extending the mandate of MONUC until 30 June 2010, the Security Council also decided that from 1 July it would be renamed the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo (MONUSCO), in view of the new phase

[16]SC/9820, 6244th Meeting (AM), 16 December 2009; SC/9832, 6253rd Meeting (AM), 23 December 2009; SC/9905, 6297th Meeting (AM), 13 April 2010.

[17]Ibid.

reached in the country. The Council recognized that the name of the Mission would mark a new stage in the life of the country and its partnership with the United Nations. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon visited the country in June 2010 to inaugurate MONUSCO and to recognize the importance of the DRC to peace, stability and development in Africa.[18]

The greatest difficulties to stability in the country represented foreign and domestic armed groups in eastern DRC: the Ugandan rebel group of Joseph Kony, the LRA, and FDLR, which operated primarily in North and South Kivu provinces. They continued to act as predatory forces, often incorporating the use of rape and other violence as a weapon against civilians. MONUSCO and the Congolese authorities planned and conducted operations against armed groups in the east in full cooperation. While not without problems, the relationship had continued to improve. However, resource concerns, particularly the shortage of military helicopters, imposed significant constraints on operations.[19]

2011, "the year of elections in Africa," was an important year in the DRC's history. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon highlighted that the successful conduct of credible elections would be a milestone on the road to stability. Efforts were underway to root out remaining armed resistance and permanently remove all threats to peace and to put an end to the crisis of legitimacy in the country. Presidential and National Assembly elections scheduled for 28 November, followed by provincial and local elections in 2012, could help further consolidate peace and stability. Security had improved in most of the DRC, with progress in dismantling foreign and Congolese armed groups in the east, although they continued to pose significant threats and 1.7 million people remained displaced.[20]

The magnitude of the challenges of organizing successful elections in the DRC was enormous, with more than 32 million voters, almost 19,000 National Assembly candidates, 11 presidential candidates, 58,000 national and 600 international observers. The security environment and

[18]Press Conference by John Holmes, the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, 7 May 2010; SC/9931, 6317th Meeting (AM), 19 May 2010; SC/9939, 6324th Meeting (AM), 28 May 2010; SG/SM/12981-AFR/2004, 30 June 2010; SG/SM/12982-AFR/2005, 30 June 2010.

[19]SC/10166, 6476th Meeting (AM), 7 February 2011.

[20]SC/10257, 6539th Meeting (AM), 18 May 2011.

the related threats to the civilian population remained MONUSCO's greatest concern. The primary threat in Orientale Province was the LRA. In the Ituri District of Orientale Province, there was some residual militia activity, and in North and South Kivu provinces, the weakened FDLR.[21]

Despite enormous challenges, the second democratic election in the DRC on 28 November 2011, had been held on schedule. Many serious irregularities were observed in the electoral process and the elections were seriously marred by a number of deaths and injuries. The Independent National Electoral Commission indicated that President Joseph Kabila garnered the most votes.[22]

In April 2012, soldiers who had integrated into the Congolese army (FARDC) under agreements reached on 23 March 2009, the so-called 23 March Movement (M23), initiated an armed mutiny. The mutiny threatened a general destabilization of the Kivus and the region and caused massive civilian displacement. MONUSCO worked closely with the Government and the FARDC to limit civilian injury, contain the conflict area and restore order as quickly and effectively as possible. In addition, MONUSCO continued to support the Congolese authorities to maintain control over areas cleared of the presence of armed groups in the eastern provinces. Following many serious irregularities and allegations of fraud in the presidential and legislative elections of 28 November 2011, the political environment in the country had been characterized by some distrust of the political representatives and institutions.[23]

On 27 September 2012, the Secretary-General convened a high-level meeting on eastern DRC aimed at finding a peaceful and sustainable resolution to the crisis. The serious security and humanitarian situation was due to the military activities of the so-called M23. Their attacks on the civilian population, United Nations peacekeepers and humanitarian actors undermined the Congolese State authority. The M23 mutiny displaced more than 320,000 people from their homes in North Kivu province, including some 60,000 who had been registered as refugees in Rwanda and Uganda. The security and humanitarian

[21] SC/10275, 6551st Meeting (AM), 9 June 2011; SC/10440, 6649th Meeting (PM), 8 November 2011.

[22] SC/10470-AFR/2299, 2 December 2011; SG/SM/14009-AFR/2302, 9 December 2011; SC/10538, 6712th Meeting (AM), 7 February 2012.

[23] SC/10672, 6785th Meeting (AM), 12 June 2012.

conditions continued to deteriorate and posed a threat to stability in the wider Great Lakes region. The M23 made advances northwards from its positions in North Kivu, perpetrating serious human rights violations, including child recruitment and sexual violence. Furthermore, other armed groups stepped up their activities.[24]

In November 2012, the situation rapidly deteriorated in North Kivu. The M23 resumed its attacks on the civilian population, on MONUSCO peacekeepers and on humanitarian actors, and entered the major eastern Congolese city of Goma. The Security Council, unanimously adopting resolution 2076 (2012), strongly condemned the M23 for its resumption of attacks and demanded the immediate withdrawal from Goma.[25]

The M23 rebellion in the eastern DRC, its new offensive operations, its occupation of Goma and North Kivu, put into question all the efforts to achieve progress for a stable and successful North Kivu province. The Congolese Government claimed that Rwanda was supporting M23, thus deliberately violating the Security Council arms embargo, established in 2003, against armed groups in the country. Rwanda's support for the M23 constituted an act of aggression. Rwanda argued it was not the cause of the crisis in the eastern DRC nor was it a party in the conflict. The DRC was a huge country with many armed groups operating in a security vacuum.[26]

The Security Council remained deeply concerned by the worsening security and humanitarian situation in the eastern part of the DRC. The mutiny sparked by the M23 rebel group in April 2012 brought another wave of misery to the eastern DRC and the civilian population in the affected areas endured terrible suffering. Finally, on 24 February 2013, Heads of State and Government of 11 African governments signed in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the DRC and the Region to end years of fighting. The Secretary-General, together with the Chairpersons of the African Union, the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region and the Southern

[24]SG/2188-AFR/2453, 27 September 2012; SG/SM/14572-AFR/2461, 9 October 2012.

[25]SC/10823, 6866th Meeting (Night), 20 November 2012.

[26]SC/10825, 6868th Meeting (AM), 21 November 2012; SC/10836, 6873rd Meeting (AM), 28 November 2012.

African Development Community, signed the Framework and acted as a guarantor of this long-term engagement. There were two proposed initiatives to combat destabilizing rebel groups. The first proposed to add an unmanned aerial vehicle surveillance capability to MONUSCO. The other was the widely discussed proposal for an additional brigade equipped with peace-enforcement authorization beyond the traditional UN peacekeeping mandate. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon called on the Security Council to create a special intervention brigade within MONUSCO to bolster the new regional accord for peace and security.[27]

On 28 March 2013, the Security Council approved the creation of a specialized intervention brigade within MONUSCO's existing 19,815 strong force. The first-ever offensive combat force was intended to neutralize and disarm the notorious M23, as well as other Congolese rebels in the eastern DRC. Acting on the recommendations of Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon and answering the call of governments in Africa's Great Lakes region, the Council unanimously adopted resolution 2098 (2013), creating, on an exceptional basis, the new brigade to carry out offensive operations. Despite the unanimous approval, several Member States expressed reservations about the decision, questioning Council action that could involve the United Nations in peace-enforcement activities. Member States warned that MONUSCO risked indirect conversion into a peace-enforcement mission, although the resolution stated clearly that the brigade would not set a precedent, the idea of enforcing peace rather than keeping it required deep reflection.[28]

United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon maintained that the United Nations was reinforcing MONUSCO with a new Force Intervention Brigade, but it was only one part of a comprehensive approach. The United States welcomed the UN Intervention Brigade in the DRC. Rwanda also supported the deployment of the Brigade. When M23 leader General Bosco Ntaganda had surrendered to the US Embassy in Kigali on 18 March 2013, Rwandan authorities had facilitated his transfer between the US and Dutch embassies following the decision to transfer him to the International Criminal Court.[29]

[27]SC/10921, 6925th Meeting (AM), 22 February 2013; SC/10924-AFR/2513, 25 February 2013; SG/SM/14831-AFR/2514, 25 February 2013; SG/SM/14831-AFR/2514, 25 February 2013; SC/10929, 6928th Meeting (PM), 5 March 2013.

[28]SC/10964, 6943rd Meeting (PM), 28 March 2013.

[29]SC/11078, 7011th Meeting (AM & PM), 25 July 2013.

After 19 months of insurgency, the M23 announced an end to its rebellion. On 12 December 2013, the Government of the DRC and the M23 signed declarations, concluding the Kampala Dialogue, a step towards ending deadly conflict.[30]

Since 2013, the MONUSCO had accomplished the defeat of M23, joint operations against the FDLR and the *Forces démocratiques alliées* (ADF), as well as the restoration of security in liberated territories, promotion of stability and State authority in the eastern part of the country. After decades of conflict between neighbouring countries, States in the region had signed the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of Congo in 2013, offering hope for security and for the improvement of living conditions of the people in the region. Yet, the situation in the DRC was volatile and FDLR, one of the oldest armed groups destabilizing the region for 20 years, and responsible for the genocide against the Tutsis, remained at large.[31]

The state of peace and security in Africa, and in particular the Great Lakes region, remained a preoccupying phenomenon with successes and continuing challenges. There had been some promising achievements in the region, but a broad range of issues persisted. Despite greatly improved security and surrender of the M23 in 2013, the protracted conflict in the DRC persisted with other remaining armed groups in the country's east. The FARDC had drastically reduced the ADF, almost 4000 combatants from several Congolese armed groups had surrendered, and the FDLR had begun to voluntarily disarm. Since 2002, more than 11,000 combatants of the FDLR had been disarmed. However, an estimated 1500 combatants were still active. MONUSCO's first priority had been to put an end to the FDLR.[32]

While progress had been made against armed groups, only two weeks after a 21 September 2014 celebration of peace in Goma following its liberation from the M23, more than 80 civilians were killed in villages

[30]SC/11174, 7058th Meeting (AM), 14 November 2013; SG/SM/15538-AFR/2766, 12 December 2013.

[31]SC/11316, 7137th Meeting (PM), 14 March 2014.

[32]SC/11513, 7237th Meeting (AM), 7 August 2014.

around Beni by the group known as the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF). Turning their anger on MONUSCO, on 22 October 2014 a crowd of 2000 civilians tried to storm its base in Beni. Rwanda considered the FDLR a major perpetrator of the genocide in 1994 and the greatest security threat in the Great Lakes region and maintained that the United Nations Force Intervention Brigade, known as FIB, failed to act against the FDLR after the M23 had been neutralized. That group was still planning to subvert Rwanda.[33]

The Security Council urged accelerated action to dismantle armed groups in the DRC, expressing deep concern over the lack of progress of the voluntary disarmament process of the FDLR. The Council called on the Government, in coordination with MONUSCO, to immediately undertake military action against those leaders and members of the FDLR who do not engage in the demobilization process.[34]

In 2015, the Great Lakes region remained at a crossroads, two years after the signing of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the DRC and the Region. The DRC and the Great Lakes region had made considerable progress, but they were yet to achieve irreversible progress for lasting peace. The greatest threat to peace and security in the Great Lakes region remained the FDLR. Operations against it were jointly planned by MONUSCO and the DRC. The appointment of officers with a history of human rights violations compelled MONUSCO to suspend its participation in and support of the operations under their command. When the MONUC had arrived in 1999, almost half the territory was insecure, out of State control and divided into as many semi-autonomous territories as there were rebel groups. In 2015, there were pockets of insecurity caused by Ugandan and Rwandan rebels. Everywhere else peace and security reigned. State authority was exercised over almost all of the territory.

The DRC Government argued the time had come for his country to fully assume responsibility for the security for its people. It requested the Council to respect that legitimate aspiration. Despite the suspension of MONUSCO's cooperation, Congolese forces had launched military operations against the FDLR.[35]

[33] SC/11513, 7237th Meeting (AM), 7 August 2014; SC/11616, 7288th Meeting (AM), 27 October 2014.

[34] SC/11630, 7296th Meeting (PM), 5 November 2014.

[35] SC/11825, 7410th Meeting (AM), 19 March 2015.

In March 2015, the Security Council extended the mandate of MONUSCO, including its Intervention Brigade, until 31 March 2016. The Brigade, extended on an exceptional basis and without creating a precedent or prejudice to the agreed principles of peacekeeping, would carry out targeted offensive operations in cooperation with the Mission, either unilaterally or jointly with the DRC Armed Forces. MONUSCO and the Congolese Government began strategic dialogue in March 2015, with a view to setting in motion a gradual, mutually agreeable exit strategy and reinvigorating sincere collaboration on security, elections, human rights and communications. Their joint operations against the FDLR in North Kivu, South Kivu and Katanda had been at a standstill for five months.[36]

In the fall of 2015, the political situation in the DRC was increasingly marked by the electoral process and negotiations on the strategic dialogue with the United Nations were deadlocked. UN representatives believed that the only efficient solutions to address the security situation were joint MONUSCO-FARDC operations. Although MONUSCO had to gradually withdraw and exit from the DRC, the UN warned that such exit should not be undertaken hastily, pointing out that the security situation had not improved or had even deteriorated, the 2.8 million people remained internally displaced and tens of thousands still lived at the mercy of armed groups.[37]

In 2016, political tensions were rising ahead of the constitutionally envisaged presidential and legislative elections in the DRC. Polarization and public discontent were fuelled by delays in the electoral process. President Joseph Kabila reiterated the need for dialogue between the ruling majority and the opposition and urged the Facilitator of the African Union, former Togolese Prime Minister Edem Kodjo, to take steps to launch the dialogue as soon as possible. While the President had urged to launch the dialogue as soon as possible, opposition members had argued that it could lead to an extension of the presidential term beyond November 2016.[38]

[36]SC/11834, 7415th Meeting (AM), 26 March 2015; SC/11969, 7484th Meeting (AM), 14 July 2015.

[37]SC/12069, 7529th Meeting (AM), 7 October 2015.

[38]DSG/SM/991-SC/12438-AFR/3408, July 2016; SC/12437, 7732nd Meeting (PM), 7 July 2016.

The Security Council stressed the crucial importance of a peaceful and credible electoral cycle, it underscored the urgency in convening an open, inclusive and peaceful political dialogue among all stakeholders focused on the holding of elections, in accordance with the Constitution, while respecting the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance. The Council expressed its deep concern at increased restrictions of the political space, in particular arrests and detention of members of the political opposition and of civil society, and ongoing delays in electoral preparations. It urged the DRC Government, as well as all relevant parties to respect human rights and to refrain from violence. UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon called for an inclusive political dialogue as the only way towards peaceful and credible elections in accordance with Security Council resolutions.[39]

In September 2016, after a group of opposition parties called the *Rassemblement* had boycotted the national dialogue despite the efforts of a facilitator named by the African Union, the Independent National Electoral Commission had announced that presidential elections would not be feasible until 18 November 2018, with completion of the voter registry by 31 July 2017. This announcement triggered widespread condemnations by the opposition, who had claimed that the Commission was being used to extend President Joseph Kabila Kabange's incumbency beyond constitutional limits. The *Rassemblement* had subsequently called for the President to step down by 19 December 2016. On 19–20 September 2016, serious violence erupted following large-scale demonstrations in Kinshasa and elsewhere, during which, at least 49 civilians were killed.[40]

The Security Council remained concerned about the risk for destabilization of the country in the absence of a swift and consensual resolution to the political crisis in the DRC. The political agreement reached on 18 October 2016 led to the appointment of Samy Badibanga as Prime Minister ahead of the formation of a transitional Government of national unity in the DRC. The agreement provided for an overhaul of the voter register and the simultaneous holding of presidential and legislative elections. The National Episcopal Conference of Congo (CENO—*Conférence épiscopale Nationale du Congo*) led the ongoing

[39]SC/12449-AFR/3414, 15 July 2016; SG/SM/18026-AFR/3443, 2 September 2016.

[40]SC/12547, 7788th Meeting (AM), 11 October 2016.

mediation efforts between the Presidential Majority and the Opposition *Rassemblement* to pave the way for peaceful, credible, inclusive and timely elections as soon as possible in the DRC. The good offices brought hope for a peaceful end to the political impasse, but the key players, particularly from the Presidential Majority and the Opposition *Rassemblement*, needed to change significantly. The Security Council called on all political actors to continue working in good faith towards a swift political solution before 19 December that would pave the way for elections as soon as possible. As 19 December approached, MONUSCO was updating its contingency plans to mitigate politically driven violence. It was the political will of the main political actors that would determine how the existing tensions were managed and whether those would degenerate into violence. The DRC was at a decisive moment and its people, as well as the international community, had great expectations vested in a free and transparent electoral process.[41]

Despite its challenges, the Democratic Republic of the Congo remained a source of hope for all of Africa. In September 2016, armed individuals and civilians from South Sudan, along with former Vice-President Riek Machar, have crossed into the DRC. The event exposed the complex links that existed between the DRC and some of its neighbours in the Great Lakes region. Foreign and Congolese armed groups continued to pose significant threats to security and stability. The resolution of the crisis in South Sudan and Sudan would benefit the DRC; the natural, yet still developing, pole of stability in the troubled region of Central Africa.[42]

[41]SG/SM/18277-AFR/3490, 17 November 2016; SC/12610, 7826th Meeting (PM), 5 December 2016.

[42]SG/SM/10859-AFR/1492, 30 January 2007; SC/8936, 5616th Meeting (AM), 9 January 2007.

Check for updates

CHAPTER 6

Sudan—South Sudan—Darfur: On the Road to Lasting Peace

> There is much at stake for the future of the people of Sudan, the region and the African continent. Indeed, Sudan was a microcosm of Africa and its stability - or instability - would have far-reaching implications.
>
> Haile Menkerios, Special Representative and Head of the United Nations Mission in Sudan[1]

The United Nations has been engaged in the quest for peace in Sudan, the largest country in Africa, for many years, through peacekeeping and diplomacy, through humanitarian assistance and development. On 9 January 2005, the Government of Sudan and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army (SPLM/A) signed the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) ending a 21-year conflict, Africa's longest-running civil war. The Agreement established a ceasefire and provided for power-sharing, wealth-sharing and modalities for elections. At the end of the six-year interim period, in 2011, an internationally monitored referendum in South Sudan would determine a preference for the unity of Sudan, or for secession. On 24 March 2005, the Security Council established the United Nations Mission in the Sudan (UNMIS) to help in the implementation of the CPA.[2]

[1] SC/9952, 6338th Meeting (AM), 14 June 2010.

[2] SG/SM/13696-AFR/2209, 11 July 2011; SC/9590, 6079th Meeting (AM), 5 February 2009; SC/9649, 6116th Meeting (PM), 30 April 2009.

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M. Jesenský, *The United Nations under Ban Ki-moon*,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-12220-1_6

Full implementation of the CPA remained critical to long-lasting peace throughout Sudan. The parties needed to progress on the major outstanding issues, the status of oil-rich Abyei region, demarcation of the 1956 border between northern and southern Sudan, and preparations for elections. Lack of progress in the CPA implementation could have a negative impact on other peace efforts, including the situation in Darfur.[3]

The fighting in Darfur, a remote western province of Sudan roughly the size of France, broke out in early 2003 between the pro-Government Arab militias known as the Janjaweed and rebels from the Sudan Liberation Army (SLA) and the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM). The conflict in Darfur began in part because of drought. When the rains failed, farmers and herders fell into competition for an increasingly scarce resource. War over these precious natural resources further compounded other factors and challenges. The conflict displaced some 2 million people amid the civil war between the north and south of Sudan. The Security Council referred the situation in Darfur to the International Criminal Court on 31 March 2005. Sudan's Government and President Omer Hassan Al-Bashir objected to the deployment of United Nations peacekeepers in Darfur, arguing that the African Union Mission in Sudan (AMIS), could maintain order in the region. After months of negotiations and mounting international pressure, the Government of Sudan agreed to support the deployment of a hybrid United Nations-African Union peacekeeping force in Darfur. On 31 July 2007, the Security Council authorized the deployment of a 26,000-strong joint United Nations-African Union force. The Council urged the Sudanese Government and all rebel groups to negotiate a permanent political settlement to the dispute in Darfur.[4]

Ban Ki-moon, speaking to the Security Council for the first time as Secretary-General early in his mandate, made clear that Sudan, and Darfur in particular, were among his top priorities. The operation in Darfur, jointly run by the United Nations and the African Union (AU), was the largest ever deployed by the United Nations. In fact, with

[3]SC/9160, 5774th Meeting (PM), 31 October 2007.

[4]SG/SM/11140-AFR/1572, 4 September 2007; SC/8940, 12 January 2007; SG/SM/10839, 11 January 2007; SC/9061, 5706th Meeting (AM), 26 June 2007; SC/9089, 5727th Meeting (PM), 31 July 2007.

more than 26,000 military and policy personnel, in addition to some 5000-civilian staff, and at the projected cost of over $2 billion annually, such a large hybrid force was unprecedented.[5]

With the UN-African Union peacekeepers authorized by the Security Council, Ban Ki-moon could push forward the broader peace process in Sudan. He met with President Omer Al-Bashir in Khartoum, visited Juba, the first Secretary-General to spend a night there, and talked to important regional players, like Muammar al-Qadhafi of Libya, to help his diplomatic efforts. Progress in Darfur was vital for the success of the CPA, as well as for the 2009 elections. But the situation on the ground was worrying. The Darfur rebel movements, including the Sudan Liberation Movement (SLM) and the JEM, had splintered, and some movement leaders have chosen to stay away from diplomatic efforts.[6]

The Darfur peace talks opened in Sirte, Libya, on 27 October 2007, led by Jan Eliasson, United Nations Special Envoy for Darfur, and Salim Ahmed Salim, his AU counterpart. Representatives of the Government of Sudan and 18 rebel movements that have not signed the Darfur Peace Agreement were present. The problems of Darfur could only be solved through a political settlement, there were complex internal and external causes to the crisis, and the humanitarian aspect was a symptom of the lack of political progress. Certain rebel groups remained obstinate and continued to commit terrorist acts and to place obstacles in the path of the peace process.[7]

The UN-African Union Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID) formally took over from the AMIS on 31 December 2007. 7000 troops and 1200 police serving with AMIS, established in 2004 to help bring peace to Darfur, exchanged their green headgear for the United Nations blue beret. At $1.7 billion, the Mission's annual budget was the highest peacekeeping budget ever proposed to the General Assembly. The UNAMID's full strength, some 20,000 troops and more than 6000 police and civilian staff, would make it the Organization's largest

[5] DPB, 8 January 2007; Ms. Lute's press conference on UNAMID, 7 August 2007.

[6] SG/SM/11133, Press Conference by UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, 28 August 2007; SG/SM/11153-AFR/1582, 12 September 2007; Jean-Marie Guéhenno, Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, press conference on Darfur peacekeeping operation, 8 October 2007; Press Conference by Jan Eliasson, Special Envoy for Darfur on peace talks in Libya, 24 October 2007; SG/SM/11243-AFR/1607, 29 October 2007.

[7] SC/9178, 5784th Meeting (PM), 27 November 2007.

peacekeeping operation. The mission was mandated to protect civilians where possible, facilitate humanitarian assistance and help provide a secure environment. The deployment of UNAMID was complemented by efforts pursuing a political settlement aimed at achieving a peace agreement between the Government of Sudan and the Darfur rebel movements.[8]

UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon welcomed the transfer of authority from the AMIS to the UNAMID, Sudan, a new and profoundly challenging chapter in the history of United Nations peacekeeping. Ultimately, the UNAMID would only be as effective as the political process it was mandated to support. Ban Ki-moon urged all the parties to cease all military action and to come to the negotiating table to settle their differences.[9]

The implementation of the CPA remained on track. The leadership of the National Congress Party (NCP) and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM) reiterated their commitment to implementing the CPA and pledged never to return to conflict. The NCP saw the SPLM committed to secession through the referendum of 2011, no matter what concessions were offered. The SPLM, on the other hand, saw the NCP as unwilling to make essential compromises and willing to write off the unity of Sudan.[10]

The issue of Abyei emerged as the biggest stumbling block between the two partners. The SPLM viewed the Abyei Boundary Commission report as final and binding according to the CPA. The NCP rejected the Report claiming that the Commission exceeded its mandate by basing its findings on the 1965 border instead of identifying the 1905 boundaries of the Dinka chiefdoms, the mandate specifically given to the Commission.[11]

Sudan remained one country with two systems for the duration of the CPA. The United Nations had one integrated and one hybrid Mission. Nevertheless, peace in Sudan was indivisible. Should the CPA unravel,

[8] GA/AB/3854, Fifth Committee, 46th Meeting (AM), 3 June 2008; AFR/1637-PKO/174, 28 December 2007.

[9] SG/SM/11353-AFR/1638-PKO/175, 31 December 2007.

[10] SC/9256, 5840th Meeting (AM), 19 February 2008.

[11] Ibid.

the prospects for a peace in Darfur would largely disappear. Should the implementation of the CPA succeed, the prospects for an end to the humanitarian crisis and a peaceful resolution could brighten.[12]

Despite all efforts, however, the peace process in Darfur remained very slim. The continued hostilities were a stark reminder that urgent international engagement was needed to pressure the parties to lay down their weapons and commit to the path of dialogue. It was commonly understood that peace was neither economically, nor politically attractive. In late December 2007 and early January 2008, Chadian regular forces and the JEM launched several attacks inside Sudanese territory in Western Darfur. Following their offensive, the Government of Sudan launched a large-scale ground and air military campaign. In addition to the Government's clear commitment to a military solution, the two most significant political and military factions, JEM-Khalil Ibrahim and the SLA-Abdul Wahid remained outside the process.[13]

Deteriorating security, harsh conditions and other obstacles in Darfur had considerably slowed the deployment of the joint United Nations-African Union Mission. A major obstacle to the success of the mission remained the lack of progress on the political front. The political environment continued to deteriorate, with the rebel movements still split and a persistent stand-off between Chad and Sudan persisting. The international community observed that even if 200,000 soldiers patrolled the ground and hundreds of helicopters were flying overhead non-stop, they could not bring about peace. Nothing short of dialogue and a process of political reconciliation would settle the issue.[14]

In resolution 1593 (2005), the Security Council had decided that the situation in Darfur warranted an investigation by the ICC. On 27 April 2007, Luis Moreno Ocampo, Prosecutor of the ICC, issued arrest warrants against Ahmad Harun, former Minister of State for the Interior of Sudan, and Ali Kushayb, a militia/Janjaweed leader who had committed crimes against humanity and war crimes in Darfur. The Government of Sudan was repeatedly challenging the Council's authority to give jurisdiction to the ICC, arguing that, since Sudan was not a member of the

[12] Ibid.

[13] SC/9304, 5872nd Meeting (AM), 22 April 2008; SC/9271, 5849th Meeting (AM), 11 March 2008.

[14] SC/9330, 5892nd Meeting (AM), 14 May 2008; SC/9370, 5922nd Meeting (AM), 24 June 2008.

Rome Statute, the Court held no jurisdiction there. The AU advised that the Council apply Article 16 of the Rome Statute of the ICC to defer issuance of the arrest warrant. The Non-Aligned Movement, the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) and the League of Arab States agreed with that view. The indictment was an inappropriate decision made at an inappropriate time, which would undermine the trust between Sudan and the United Nations and harm the fragile security situation in Darfur.[15]

In February 2009, Ashraf Jehangir Qazi, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and the Head of the UNMIS, warned that 2009 could be a make or break year for the CPA and for the prospect of peace in Sudan. The overall security situation remained fragile and unpredictable with continuing armed clashes, banditry, tribal conflicts and rebel activity. Sudan and the international community reached a critical juncture. As the interim period was coming to an end in two years, preparations for a peaceful 2011 referendum, border demarcation, census results, elections and disarmament, demobilization and reintegration remained key outstanding issues. The ICC's actions had a major impact on Sudanese political dynamics and have diverted much attention, at a time when outstanding issues related to the CPA required the parties' cooperation.[16]

In July 2008, Prosecutor Luis Moreno-Ocampo accused President Al-Bashir of committing war crimes in the Darfur region. Moreno-Ocampo argued that in March 2003 President Al-Bashir had ordered attacks against the Fur, Masalit and Zaghawa peoples and triggered brutal attacks in the villages and camps for displaced persons, where at least 35,000 persons had been killed. Sudan viewed the ICC's rulings as politically motivated and the Chief Prosecutor as a tool used to destabilize the country. The Government described events in Darfur as a traditional conflict over water and land, not unlike in other parts of the world, blown out of proportion to justify intervention in Sudan's domestic affairs. The Sudanese pointed out that the United States Government had negotiated immunity for its soldiers by invoking Security Council resolutions. Security Council resolution 1593 (2005), referring the

[15]SC/9412, 5947th Meeting (Night), 31 July 2008; SC/9186, 5789th Meeting (AM), 5 December 2007.

[16]SC/9590, 6079th Meeting (AM), 5 February 2009.

situation in Darfur to the Prosecutor of the ICC, exempted nationals from states outside the Rome Statute from the ICC jurisdiction for all alleged acts related to Sudan. The AU advised the Security Council to request the Court to defer the case against President Al-Bashir.[17]

On 4 March 2009, the ICC issued a warrant for the arrest of President Omer Hassan Al-Bashir for his alleged responsibility for crimes committed in Darfur. President Al-Bashir, charged with five counts of crimes against humanity and two counts of war crimes, became the first sitting Head of State to be indicted by the Court. Sudan was not a party to the Rome Statute. However, the Security Council, when it referred the situation in Darfur to the Prosecutor of the ICC, in its resolution 1593 (2005), decided, acting under Chapter VII of the Charter, that Sudan should cooperate fully with the Court. At the same time, the Council recognized that States not party to the Rome Statute had no obligation to cooperate. It was not a very clear-cut situation.[18]

The Secretary-General did not specifically ask President Al-Bashir to surrender himself. He called on the Government of Sudan to address the issues of peace and justice in a manner consistent with Security Council resolutions. At the same time, he called on all parties to work in good faith towards a political solution to end the conflict in Darfur. But the arrest warrant aggravated the situation. It polarized Sudanese politics and weakened those who supported compromise and consensus. The indictment created a new reality in Sudan and overwhelmed the Sudanese political process. As a result of the indictment by the ICC, the Sudanese authorities decided to suspend the operations of 3 national and 13 international non-governmental organizations.[19]

The 11–13 April 2010 presidential and parliamentary elections in Sudan ended the transitional period that began when the decades-long civil war ended in 2005. On 26 April 2010, full results were released, confirming President Omer Hassan Al-Bashir as the winner.

[17]SC/9516, 6028th Meeting (AM), 3 December 2008; Press Conference by Permanent Representative of Sudan on ICC's Arrest Warrant against President Omer Hassan Al-Bashir, 4 March 2009.

[18]SG/SM/12123-AFR/1820-L/3140, 4 March 2009; Press Conference by Non-Governmental Organizations on ICC's Indictment of Sudanese President, 4 March 2009; DPB, 4 March 2009.

[19]SC/9622, 6096th Meeting (PM), 20 March 2009; SC/9644, 6112th Meeting (AM), 27 April 2009.

Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon decided to send two top UN officials in Sudan to attend the inauguration of the President. His decision sparked criticism, in the past, the UN policy was to avoid meetings with people wanted by the ICC. Ban Ki-moon remained firm, UNMIS and UNAMID were very important peacekeeping missions in Sudan, mandated by the Security Council, and the Sudanese people have elected Omer Al-Bashir as their President.[20]

The referendum on the right of self-determination of the people of Southern Sudan took place between 9 and 15 January 2011. The results showed that out of almost 4 million registered voters, 97.58% had participated in a vote, with an overwhelming majority—98.83%—voting for secession. On 7 February 2011, President Omer Al-Bashir confirmed the readiness of the Government of Sudan to recognize an independent South Sudan at the end of the CPA period on 9 July 2011.[21]

Following the successful completion of the Southern Sudan self-determination referendum, it was imperative to quickly overcome remaining challenges in implementing the CPA. A number of questions, such as border demarcation, Abyei, the popular consultations in the Blue Nile and Southern Kordofan states, and integration of the SPLA into the Sudan Armed Forces, still needed to be resolved.[22]

As good neighbourly relations between North and South remained the overarching condition for peace and stability in Sudan, the Secretary-General urged them to consider a continued United Nations presence. While South Sudan expressed willingness and its readiness, Sudan indicated that the UNMIS should not continue. Therefore, the Security Council established the United Nations Mission in the Republic of South Sudan (UNMISS) in the world's newest country. On 20 June 2011, Northern and Southern Sudan signed an agreement on Abyei. The Government of Sudan and the SPLM agreed to demilitarize resource-rich Abyei and allow an interim force of Ethiopian peacekeepers to step in. In the wake of the agreement, the Security Council established the United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei (UNISFA). Finally, on 11 July 2011, the Security Council decided to close the

[20]SC/9916, 6304th Meeting (AM), 29 April 2010; SG/SM/12910, 24 May 2010.

[21]SC/10155, 6468th Meeting (AM), 18 January 2011; SG/SM/13394-AFR/2113, 7 February 2011; SC/10169, 6478th Meeting (AM & PM), 9 February 2011.

[22]SC/10227, 6517th Meeting (AM), 20 April 2011.

six-year-old UNMIS. The United States, the United Kingdom and France regretted that UNMIS was being drawn down with no ceasefire in place for South Kordofan and Blue Nile States, where fighting was continuing.[23]

South Sudan formally separated from Sudan on 9 July 2011 and Sudan was the first State to recognize it. UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon attended the South Sudan independence ceremony in Juba. He greeted the newest nation on earth, and commended President Salva Kiir, President Omer Al-Bashir of Sudan for difficult decisions and compromises. This was an important day for the United Nations, the AU, international non-governmental organizations and individual Member States engaged in the quest for peace in Sudan for many years. The General Assembly admitted South Sudan as a member of the United Nations on 14 July 2011.[24]

Initial steps taken by parties provided reason for optimism, but unfortunately, even with the independence of South Sudan, the crisis was still continuing. Sudan and South Sudan were slow in implementing the CPA, including the status of Abyei, and sharing the national wealth, particularly oil. Non-signatory rebel movements, the JEM, the SLA-Minni Minawi and the SLA-Abdul Wahid, in spite of the joint United Nations-African Union mediation, remained outside of the Doha Document for Peace in Darfur, finalized at the All Darfur Stakeholders Conference in May 2011. The military clashes in the region bordering Sudan and South Sudan threatened to precipitate a resumption of conflict between the two countries.[25]

In the spring of 2012, conflict between Sudan and South Sudan resumed. The Security Council demanded that both sides immediately end cross-border violence and support to armed proxies. The Council demanded withdrawal of the SPLA from the oil-rich area of Heglig in Sudan and an end to aerial bombardments by Sudan. In May 2012,

[23]SC/10267, 6542nd Meeting (PM), 31 May 2011; SC/10286, 6559th Meeting (AM), 20 June 2011; SC/10298, 6567th Meeting (AM), 27 June 2011; SC/10314, 6576th Meeting (AM), 8 July 2011; SC/10317, 6579th Meeting (PM), 11 July 2011.

[24]SC/10318, 6580th Meeting (PM), 11 July 2011; SG/SM/13696-AFR/2209, 11 July 2011; SC/10323, 6583rd Meeting (AM), 13 July 2011.

[25]SC/10899, 6910th Meeting (PM), 24 January 2013; SG/SM/14083, 25 January 2012; SC/10515, 6700th Meeting (AM), 11 January 2012; SC/10594-AFR/2362, 27 March 2012.

after the repeated calls, the Security Council decided that Sudan and South Sudan must immediately cease all hostilities, withdraw forces, and resume negotiations under threat of sanctions. The Council decided, unanimously adopting resolution 2046 (2012), that Sudan and South Sudan must end hostilities within 48 hours and unconditionally resume negotiations under the auspices of the AU.[26]

The United Nations remained deeply concerned about internal conflict in Sudan and South Sudan. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon acknowledged the crisis was continuing, even with the independence of South Sudan, the relationship between south and north Sudan was not smooth. 2013 marked 10 years since the outbreak of the Darfur conflict and the repeated tragic incidents in which UN or AU peacekeepers had been killed, underscored that the security situation in the region remained volatile. In Sudan, continued fighting in Darfur, Southern Kordofan and Blue Nile States displaced more than 1 million people. In South Sudan, in Jonglei State, tens of thousands of people needed assistance and protection. The 21 September 2012 proposal by the AU High-level Implementation Panel to hold a referendum in the Abyei region stipulated that a referendum be held in October 2013. The proposal was accepted by South Sudan but rejected by Sudan. In reaction, Abyei decided to organize its own referendum. Sudan argued that the region of Abyei, as per the CPA, was not open to argument, and it would remain part of Sudan until its final status was decided.[27]

On 15 December 2013, the fighting began between members of the SPLA in Juba and other areas in South Sudan. The political dispute among the country's political leaders caused rapidly deteriorating crisis. The Security Council responded to the deteriorating security and humanitarian situation by increasing force levels of the UN Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS).[28]

[26]SC/10594-AFR/2362, 27 March 2012; SC/10606, 6749th Meeting (PM), 12 April 2012; SC/10632, 6764th Meeting (AM), 2 May 2012; SG/2189-AFR/2455, 28 September 2012.

[27]SG/SM/14083, 25 January 2012; DSG/SM/709-AFR/2706, 27 September 2013; SC/11076, 7010th Meeting (AM), 24 July 2013; SC/11156, 7048th Meeting (AM), 23 October 2013; SC/11184, 7067th Meeting (AM), 25 November 2013.

[28]SC/11221, 17 December 2013; SG/SM/15546-AFR/2770, 17 December 2013; SC/11227-AFR/2775, 20 December 2013; SC/11230, 7091st Meeting (PM), 24 December 2013; Press Conference by Hilde Johnson, Secretary-General's Special Representative for South Sudan, 26 December 2013.

The fighting left thousands of civilians killed and internally displaced in need of humanitarian assistance, including 73,000 civilians seeking refuge and protection on UNMISS bases. United Nations staff were threatened by South Sudan military when they refused to allow armed soldiers to forcibly enter the UNMISS compound in Bor. The crisis had the potential to draw in many of the Sudanese rebel movements in Darfur and thereby undermine efforts to end the conflicts in Darfur, South Kordofan State and Blue Nile State. The internal fighting has set South Sudan back a decade, and the deteriorating humanitarian situation, combined with the existing food insecurity crisis in the country, threatened to ignite famine and regional instability.[29]

South Sudan had enjoyed a bright start with ample international and civil society support, however, personal rivalries had led to the conflicts fuelling the catastrophe. Extreme violence and a national political crisis displaced some 800,000 people. South Sudan was at risk of a widespread humanitarian crisis. The conflict between the Government of South Sudan and its opponents within the SPLM/A supporting former Vice-President Riek Machar expanded throughout the country. The perception that those supporting Riek Machar were mostly ethnic Nuer and President Kiir's supporters mostly Dinka had heightened the risk of ethnically motivated violence. In May 2014, Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon visited South Sudan to press President Salva Kiir and former Vice-President Riek Machar to step back from the destructive path they were on and to work together to heal the wounds they had opened. Ban Ki-moon acknowledged the courage shown by the UN Mission in South Sudan, which had saved tens of thousands of lives, by opening its gates around the country. After this visit, President Salva Kiir and Riek Machar met under the mediation of Ethiopian Prime Minister Hailemiriam Dessalegn and signed a framework agreement for the peace process.[30]

After three years of independence, South Sudan was on the brink of a humanitarian catastrophe. The ceasefire agreements, signed by the Government and the opposition Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPML/A) on 23 January, 9 May and 10 June 2014, had been violated.

[29]SG/SM/15592-AFR/2796, 19 January 2014; SC/11260, 7100th Meeting (AM), 23 January 2014; SC/11261-AFR/2802, 23 January 2014; DPB, 17 January 2014; SC/11278-AFR/2816, 13 February 2014.

[30]SC/11378, 7168th Meeting (PM), 2 May 2014; SC/11391, 7172nd Meeting (PM), 12 May 2014; SC/11323, 7141st Meeting (PM), 18 March 2014.

President Salva Kiir Mayardit and former Vice-President Riek Machar Teny, the two leaders of South Sudan, engaged in a senseless power struggle and allowed their personal ambitions to jeopardize the future of an entire nation. Marking the one-year anniversary of the outbreak of conflict in South Sudan, UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon voiced his dismay that the parties have yet to reach a CPA. The Security Council demanded that the clashing leaders and all parties refrain from further violence and uphold the commitment to establish a transitional government of national unity (TGNU).[31]

The Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) set the deadlines for the conclusion of the South Sudan negotiations. Foreseeing little progress in peace talks due to continued fighting and lack of political will, the Security Council pressured rival leaders into ending the bloodshed and engaging in the peace process towards political resolution of the crisis. Through the unanimous adoption of resolution 2206 (2015), the Council condemned the violations to the Cessation of Hostilities Agreements signed by South Sudan and the SPLM and laid the framework for targeted sanctions, making clear that the parties must meet IGAD deadlines for resolving the conflict and begin creating a national unity Government.[32]

In August 2015, South Sudan President Salva Kiir Mayardit, Riek Machar Teny on behalf of the SPLM/A in Opposition, and Pagan Amum Okiech, a representative for the former political detainees, signed the Agreement on the Resolution of the South Sudan Conflict. The conflict uprooted about 2.2 million people, internally displaced nearly 1.4 million, including over 200,000 at United Nations bases. Over 630,000 have sought refuge in neighbouring countries and about 4.6 million people face acute food insecurity. The Agreement to resolve the nearly two-year conflict was the first step in reversing the political and economic situation, as well as humanitarian and security catastrophe.[33]

[31]SC/11510, 7235th Meeting (AM), 6 August 2014; SG/SM/16424-AFR/3040, 14 December 2014; SC/11703, 7341st Meeting (PM), 15 December 2014.

[32]SG/SM/16562-AFR/3087, 3 March 2015; SC/11797, 7392nd Meeting (PM), 24 February 2015; SC/11805, 7396th Meeting (AM), 3 March 2015.

[33]SC/12029, 7515th Meeting (PM), 28 August 2015; SG/2221-AFR/3230, 2 October 2015; SC/12073, 7531st Meeting (AM), 9 October 2015.

The August 2015 Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan offered the best opportunity for South Sudan to restore peace and stability. However, progress towards the formation of a TGNU was lagging behind the timetables outlined in the Agreement. Finally, the TGNU in South Sudan was formed on 29 April 2016, as an important milestone in implementation of the Agreement. Riek Machar landed in Juba on a United Nations aircraft and was sworn into office.[34]

However, the peace process in South Sudan unravelled in July 2016. From 7 to 10 July 2016, Juba in South Sudan experienced ongoing fighting between soldiers of the SPLA and the SPLA in Opposition, and the separate attacks on United Nations and diplomatic officials. On 12 August 2016, the Security Council decided to increase the force levels of UNMISS up to a ceiling of 17,000 troops, including 4000 for the Regional Protection Force. Several delegates pointed out that the basic principles of peacekeeping included obtaining consent of the State and the Council's resolution disregarded the views of the Transitional Government of National Unity. The fighting had drained South Sudan of resources and the population was becoming increasingly desperate. What had previously been two opposing forces had splintered into multiple armed groups, some formed along ethnic lines. The security situation in South Sudan was deeply concerning and there was the possibility of an outright ethnic war.[35]

The deteriorating situation in South Sudan became one of the world's most urgent crises in 2016. Half of South Sudan's population, approximately 6.1 million people, required humanitarian assistance. Approximately 3.1 million people in the country had to flee their homes. President Salva Kiir and his loyalists, Riek Machar, the Sudanese People's Liberation Movement in Opposition (SPLM-In Opposition) and other opposition groups, were pursuing a military escalation. Tens of thousands of civilians had been killed, while the economy was in ruins. If a political

[34] SC/12251, 7628th Meeting (AM), 19 February 2016; SC/12350-AFR/3371, 4 May 2016; SC/12339, 7678th Meeting (AM), 26 April 2016.

[35] SG/SM/17912-AFR/3409, 8 July 2016; SC/12440-AFR/3410-PKO/593, 9 July 2016; SC/12445, 7737th Meeting (AM), 13 July 2016; SG/SM/17932-DEV/3237, 16 July 2016; SC/12475, 7754th Meeting (PM), 12 August 2016; SC/12591, 7814th Meeting (PM), 17 November 2016; SC/12634, 7840th Meeting (PM), 16 December 2016.

solution was not urgently found to stop the violence, the humanitarian crisis in South Sudan would cascade beyond control. UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon and some countries called for an arms embargo on South Sudan to diminish the capacity of all sides to wage war. The Intergovernmental Authority for Development (IGAD) Assembly of Heads of State and Government at its extraordinary Summit in December 2016 in Addis Ababa, noted that an arms embargo or sanctions on South Sudan would not provide the solution sought to bring about permanent peace and stability. What was required was dialogue and commitment by all South Sudanese parties to implement the agreement.[36]

The patience of the international community with parties in the conflict was wearing thin. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon laid the responsibility for the deteriorating situation in South Sudan squarely with the leaders of that country: "They have betrayed the public trust and continue to show a perverse sense of entitlement, seeking to retain power and wealth at all costs."[37] He called for the imposition of an arms embargo in order to stem the capacity to wage war on all sides. On 23 December 2016, the Security Council voted to impose an arms embargo and targeted sanctions on South Sudan. The draft resolution was defeated by a vote of 7 in favour to none against, with 8 abstentions. The Representative of South Sudan explained that punitive measures could harden positions, and an arms embargo would only weaken the Government and strengthen the numerous militia and armed groups. He reiterated South Sudan's commitment to implementation of the Peace Agreement and to work with all stakeholders in restoring peace and stability to the country.[38]

In 2011, Sudan demonstrated how the spirit of peace could overcome decades of war. Thereafter, both North and South needed to consolidate peace and to deliver on their promises to their people: governance, economic development, social services and close neighbourly relations. Both Northern and Southern Sudanese leaders and the opposition

[36] SC/12642, 7846th Meeting (AM), 19 December 2016; SG/SM/18384-SC/12644-AFR/3512, 19 December 2016; SC/12634, 7840th Meeting (PM), 16 December 2016.

[37] SC/12642, 7846th Meeting (AM), 19 December 2016.

[38] SC/12653, 7850th Meeting (AM), 23 December 2016. France, New Zealand, Spain, Ukraine, the United Kingdom, the United States and Uruguay voted in favour, China, Russia, Angola, Egypt, Japan, Malaysia, Senegal and Venezuela abstained. Ibid.

needed to maintain the spirit generated by the successful conclusion of the referendum in 2011. The vote was a major milestone on the road to lasting peace, a new, historic moment for Sudan. The North and South Sudanese, and South Sudan in particular, desperately needed peace and progress and to contribute to this in the immediate region and throughout the continent.[39]

Unfortunately, even with the independence of South Sudan, the crisis was continuing. The internal fighting in South Sudan in 2011–2016 brought the country and the entire region on the brink of a humanitarian catastrophe. There was plenty of room to criticize the Governments and the rebel movements, but the actors did not fall into neat categories of "good guys" versus "bad guys"; there were "good" and "bad" on all sides. Sudan and South Sudan needed all the help it could get to enable them to make the compromises needed and to ensure that stability and peace prevail.[40]

The futility that Ban Ki-moon felt about the situation in South Sudan was also evident in another crisis with regional consequences: Afghanistan. This was another crisis Ban Ki-moon "inherited" where the threat of the local conflict spilling over its borders remained a source of grave concern. Afghanistan was engulfed in civil war with thousands of civilians killed, ruined economy and millions of people displaced. The responsibility for this tragedy lay with the Government and the Taliban, the rebel movement, and their supporters. The Afghan Government and its supporters were contemplating military solution to the conflict, and there were clear indications that the Taliban and other opposition and terrorist groups were also pursuing a military escalation. The United Nations, regional actors and international community led efforts to revive the political process in Afghanistan, aware that if a political solution was not found to stop the violence, the humanitarian crisis could cascade beyond control.

[39]SC/10169, 6478th Meeting (AM & PM), 9 February 2011.

[40]SC/9370, 5922nd Meeting (AM), 24 June 2008; SC/9517, 6029th Meeting (PM), 3 December 2008; SC/10155, 6468th Meeting (AM), 18 January 2011; SC/10169, 6478th Meeting (AM & PM), 9 February 2011; SC/10445, 6656th Meeting (AM), 11 November 2011; SG/SM/14083, 25 January 2012.

Check for updates

CHAPTER 7

Afghanistan: Stories of Resilience and Accomplishment

> It was amazing how much actually worked in Afghanistan after 34 years of conflict, rather than what did not.
>
> Michael Keating, Deputy Special Representative for Afghanistan[1]

After decades of conflict Afghanistan represented a challenging environment for the United Nations. The United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) and the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), the former established in 2002 and the latter authorized in 2001, facilitated its transition and guaranteed that Afghanistan would not once again become a failed State. On 31 January 2006, the international community launched the Afghanistan Compact, a five-year framework for cooperation between Afghan and international efforts, to consolidate institutions, curb insecurity, control the illegal drug trade and stimulate the economy. The Afghanistan Compact faced serious challenges. Despite tactical successes by national and international military forces, the anti-Government elements, the Taliban and related armed groups were far from defeated.[2]

[1] Press Conference by Michael Keating, Deputy Special Representative for Afghanistan and the United Nations Resident Coordinator and Humanitarian Coordinator in Afghanistan, 14 September 2012.

[2] SC/9274, 5851st Meeting, 12 March 2008; SC/8940, Security Council 2006 Round-up, 12 January 2007.

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M. Jesenský, *The United Nations under Ban Ki-moon*,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-12220-1_7

In 1999 the Security Council began to consider Al-Qaida, the Taliban and associated individuals and entities, to combat terrorism in all its forms in Afghanistan. The Council adopted resolution 1267 (1999) establishing the 1267 Committee to coordinate international activities against terrorism. In December 2006, the Security Council adjusted its approach and decided to sanction the Taliban responsible for the latest upsurge in violence and, at the same time, to remove from its sanction list the Taliban who had severed their ties with the Al-Qaida.[3]

In the spring of 2007, the situation in Afghanistan represented a mixed picture. The country had made significant progress in political, economic and social development, but security was worsening without signs of improvement. There had been a significant surge in Taliban activities, mainly in the southern parts of the country. Taliban forces retained the ability to actively challenge Government and international forces. Popular alienation remained a key factor behind the revitalized insurgency and stemmed from inappropriate Government policies and marginalization of those outside the dominant social and political groups. The Taliban and insurgent groups bore responsibility for the high toll of deaths and injuries caused by suicide bombings, but Government and international forces also caused civilian casualties. The continued lack of a secure environment severely limited the ability of UNAMA to implement its mandate.[4]

On 29 June 2007, UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon paid a surprise visit to Kabul. He met President Hamid Karzai to indicate the international community's ongoing support to Afghanistan's successful transition from war and conflict to peace and stability. It became evident that, unless the sources of insecurity were addressed in a comprehensive and resolute manner, all efforts to achieve a stable and prosperous Afghanistan would be in vain. Six years after the fall of the Taliban, Afghanistan was still unable to effectively deal with the insurgency. While the military campaign remained the centrepiece of its efforts, the Government accorded greater attention to political outreach and national reconciliation. As a result, President Karzai invited the Taliban to start political dialogue.[5]

[3] SC/9021, 5679th Meeting (AM), 22 May 2007.

[4] SC/8972, 5641st Meeting (AM), 20 March 2007.

[5] DPB, 29 June 2007; GA/10654, Plenary, 44th & 45th Meetings (AM & PM), 5 November 2007; SC/8972, 5641st Meeting (AM), 20 March 2007; SC/9274, 5851st Meeting, 12 March 2008; DPB, 14 September 2007.

On 23 September 2007, the Secretary-General and Afghan President Karzai chaired a ministerial-level event in New York to galvanize the international community's long-term commitment to assist Afghanistan under the framework of the International Compact and to reaffirm the United Nations central role in an international partnership in support of the country. While serious challenges in Afghanistan continued, there had also been significant achievements, such as the increased number of school children, infrastructure rebuilding and the growth of the economy and foreign trade. Notwithstanding the challenges, progress had been made, the successes also included the adoption of a progressive Constitution, and national elections for President and Parliament.[6]

In 2007 insurgent and terrorist activity in Afghanistan increased sharply with more than 8000 conflict-related deaths. Insurgency had proven to be more resilient than expected and governmental institutions remained fragile. Afghanistan remained divided between the generally more stable west and north with security problems linked to factionalism and criminality, and the south and east with an increasingly coordinated insurgency. The insurgency drew strength from elements within the Afghan community and from foreign-based networks.[7]

The UNAMA's role in 2008–2009 was guided by the political calendar, Afghanistan's presidential and parliamentary elections, and the evolving situation on the ground. The conflict was placing increasing pressure on civilians. Kai Eide, Special Representative for Afghanistan, warned that the solution to the conflict would fundamentally have to be a political one determined by the Afghans themselves. The Secretary-General described the situation as precarious and urged more political dialogue. At the same time, there were realistic and practical concerns and challenges of eradicating, fighting against terrorism, therefore, military operations and political dialogue and political solutions would need to be harmoniously balanced.[8]

The situation in Afghanistan was deteriorating, with 39% more civilian victims in 2008 than in 2007, more than half of them caused by international forces. While the fundamental cause of the civilian

[6]Press Conference by Nicholas Haysom, Director for Political Affairs of the Secretary-General's Executive Office, 13 September 2007; GA/10654, Plenary, 44th & 45th Meetings (AM & PM), 5 November 2007.

[7]SC/9274, 5851st Meeting, 12 March 2008; A/62/722-S/2008/159, paras. 17–18.

[8]SC/9392, 5930th Meeting, 9 July 2008; SG/SM/11851, Press Conference by Secretary-General, 7 October 2008.

casualties was the Taliban, the rise of insurgency and rising Western casualties made a dialogue with the Taliban tolerable. Afghanistan authorities accepted that the Taliban were a heterogeneous group in which some members might be willing to participate in the peace process. The Afghan Government and the Taliban held peace talks in Saudi Arabia in the fall of 2008.[9]

Afghanistan faced daunting and multifaceted challenges. There was growing consensus among Afghans that any dialogue with anti-Government elements had to be conducted from a position of strength and would be a complement to the fight against terrorism. The arrival of the new United States Administration of Barack Obama produced strong expectations. Human rights observers paid particular attention to the future of the Guantánamo Bay detention centre. Afghanistan was at a critical juncture. While many called for discussions to end the violence, no one wanted to see the Taliban return to power.[10]

2008 ended as the most violent year in Afghanistan since 2001, with more than 2100 civilians killed in fighting, an almost 40% increase since 2007. Despite the presence of 70,000 international troops operating alongside Afghan forces, the situation could not be dealt with through military means alone. The Afghan Government recognized the importance of a political solution negotiated with elements of the Taliban willing to reconcile. The UNAMA Mission introduced a new strategy to "Afghanize" ownership of the transition process.[11]

President Barack Obama made Afghanistan a top national security priority and his goals included disrupting, defeating and dismantling Al-Qaida and building up the Government's capacity. The presidential and provincial council elections on 20 August 2009 were run, for the first time, entirely under the responsibility of the Afghan authorities. The presidential election, marred by irregularities in the first round, by the withdrawal of President Karzai's main opponent, Abdullah Abdullah, in the second, and a campaign of intimidation by the Taliban, generated significant political turbulence. Nevertheless, the

[9]SC/9472, 5994th Meeting (AM), 14 October 2008; DPB, 13 October 2008.

[10]SC/9519, 6031st Meeting, 4 December 2008; Press Conference by Mr. Scheinin, Special Rapporteur on Human Rights and Countering Terrorism, 22 October 2008.

[11]DPB, 17 February 2009; SC/9619, 6094th Meeting (PM), 19 March 2009; A/63/751-S/2009/135, paras. 19, 29, 66, 84.

world witnessed, with admiration, the courage of the Afghan people to cast their votes under challenging circumstances. Now the credibility of President Hamid Karzai and the new Afghan Government rested on the ability to deliver better security, governance, justice and economic progress to the Afghan people.[12]

2009 was an extremely challenging period for Afghanistan and the UNAMA Mission. The protracted electoral process, the deteriorating security situation, doubts about the strategies of both the Government and the international community undermined confidence in Afghanistan's leadership and affected international support. On 28 October 2009, the Taliban attacked the Bakhtar guest house in Kabul, where 34 United Nations staff were residing. Three Afghan security personnel and five United Nations staff members lost their lives and the tragic incident contributed to a gloomy atmosphere.[13]

The United Nations achieved much in Afghanistan in the areas of education, health and institution-building. Kai Eide, Special Representative of the Secretary-General, called for a transition strategy that would include a peace and reconciliation process as an integral part of the political agenda. Eide argued there was a tendency to make decisions and operate in a way that Afghans perceived as disrespectful. They sometimes felt their country was being treated as a no-man's land and not a sovereign State. That attitude contributed to tension between the Government and the international community, fuelled suspicion of foreign interference and bred a sense of humiliation.[14]

2009 was the most volatile year since the 2001 fall of the Taliban, averaging 960 security incidents per month, versus 741 in 2008. President Hamid Karzai launched a peace and reintegration programme to persuade the Taliban to end violence. The United States supported opening the door to the Taliban to leave the battlefield and reintegrate into society. For the first time since 2001, the Security Council was

[12]SC/9751, 6194th Meeting (AM), 29 September 2009; GA/10884, Plenary 40th & 41st Meetings (AM & PM), 9 November 2009; SC/9834, 6255th Meeting (AM); 6 January 2010; Press Conference by Senior UN Officials on Afghanistan's Presidential Elections, 7 October 2009; Report of the United Nations Secretary-General on the situation in Afghanistan A/64/364-S/2009/475, para. 2.

[13]DPB, 4 January 2010; SC/9834, 6255th Meeting (AM), 6 January 2010; SG/SM/12857-AFG/355-ORG/1529, 26 April 2010.

[14]SC/9834, 6255th Meeting (AM), 6 January 2010; DPB, 26 January 2010.

debating a mandate that focused on a transition to Afghan ownership, "Afghanization," of the country's peace, security, and economic and electoral reform processes.[15]

The Consultative Peace Jirga, held from 2 to 4 June 2010, defined the framework for an intra-Afghan dialogue and talks on a peace process. The Peace Jirga endorsed the initiative of President Hamid Karzai and called on the Afghan Government and international forces to release Afghans detained on incoherent accusations and to remove the names of the Afghan opposition from the Security Council sanctions list. However, the Taliban reacted disapprovingly to the peace and reconciliation proposals.[16]

2011 marked 10 years since the end of Taliban rule, and also the start of an ambitious transition to full Afghan responsibility and ownership of governance, security and development efforts. The UNAMA supported a transition to greater Afghan responsibility and ownership in security and civilian areas. An opportunity had been given to an Afghan-led and inclusive reconciliation process, with a view to bringing the opposition groups into the political mainstream. In March 2011, several well-known international personalities wrote a joint letter to UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon arguing in effect that the war in Afghanistan was unwinnable and that international efforts should be made to resolve the situation.[17]

On 1 May 2011, UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon welcomed the news of Osama bin Laden's death announced by United States President Barack Obama. Ban Ki-moon said that the crimes of Al-Qaida touched most continents, bringing tragedy and loss of life to thousands of men, women and children. He proposed to remember his victims and noted that the General Assembly has adopted a global counter-terrorism strategy to completely eradicate global terrorism.[18]

[15] SC/9885, 6287th Meeting (AM), 18 March 2010.

[16] SC/9970, 6351st Meeting (AM), 30 June 2010.

[17] SC/10398, 6625th Meeting (AM), 29 September 2011; SC/10199, 6497th Meeting (AM), 17 March 2011; DPB, 24 March 2011. The Secretary-General received a letter on Afghanistan signed by Dr. Robert P. Finn, General Lord Guthrie of Craigiebank, Tom Koenigs, Lord Mark Malloch-Brown, David Miliband, Lord Robertson of Port Ellen, and Francesc Vendrell. Ibid.

[18] DPB, 2 May 2011; SG/SM/13535, 2 May 2011.

Some members of the Taliban rejected the terrorist ideology of Al-Qaida and joined in the Government reconciliation process to end the conflict in Afghanistan. The 20 July 2010 Kabul Communiqué, supported by the Government and the international community, outlined the conditions for reconciliation—the renunciation of violence, separation from international terrorist organizations and respect for the Afghan Constitution. On 17 June 2011, the Security Council decided to make the distinction between Al-Qaida and the Taliban, and to split the Al-Qaida and Taliban sanctions regime. In effect, adopting resolutions 1988 (2011) and 1989 (2011), the Security Council designated the list of the good Taliban and bad Taliban. Those Taliban constituting a threat to Afghanistan would be on a separate list, as designated by a new Committee. The United States, Germany, India, France, Portugal and the United Kingdom welcomed distinguishing between Al-Qaida and the Taliban, as separating extremists from those who might participate in the Afghan reconciliation process.[19]

In June 2011, President Obama announced the start of the withdrawal of American forces from Afghanistan. The United States planned to withdraw its forces by 2014. International coalition forces headed towards a complete transition to Afghan responsibility for security in mid-2014. The United Nations welcomed the decision as the beginning of a transition and ultimately a full Afghan leadership and ownership.[20]

In 2011, the peace process had seen both significant steps forward and major setbacks. Regrettably, violence remained a constant in the lives of many Afghans. In July and August, insurgents launched complex suicide attacks in urban centres, including on the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) compound, the Intercontinental Hotel, the British Council and the United States Embassy in Kabul. On 20 September 2011, a suicide bomber posing as a Taliban peace envoy assassinated Burhanuddin Rabbani, head of the High Peace Council, and former President of Afghanistan. 2011 proved that "the writing was on the wall" as far as security was concerned. Insurgents continued to conduct a campaign of intimidation with assassinations of high-level officials.

[19] SC/10285/REV.1, 6557th Meeting (PM), 17 June 2011; SC/10447, 6658th Meeting (PM), 14 November 2011.

[20] DPB, 23 June 2011; SC/10309, 6574th Meeting (AM), 6 July 2011.

However, reconciliation efforts and an all-inclusive, Afghan-led dialogue remained the top priority for the Government and the international community.[21]

2011 was the fifth year in a row that Afghan civilian deaths rose. On 24 January 2012, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Navi Pillay, expressed her disappointment that the United States had failed to close the Guantánamo Bay detention centre. In 2012, 10 years after the fall of the Taliban, Afghanistan's strategy of national reconciliation was taking precedence over a military approach and the dynamics of an Afghan-led reconciliation shifted with the announcement of the opening of the Taliban office in Qatar. At the national level, outreach and reintegration efforts brought back nearly 3500 members of the armed opposition.[22]

In 2012, high-level meetings in Chicago, Kabul and Tokyo redefined the partnership between Afghanistan and the world community. Afghanistan's partners confirmed their interest and support for the country. The Kabul Conference normalized regional cooperation and the Tokyo Conference on Afghanistan pledged continued assistance during the transition into the transformation decade (2015–2024). Finally, Afghanistan signed a bilateral cooperation agreement with the United States, providing a long-term framework for their relationship. The United States reaffirmed it did not seek a permanent military presence in Afghanistan.[23]

In 2012, civilian casualties in Afghanistan's armed conflict decreased for the first time in six years. Afghanistan's political, security and economic transition process continued. The Afghan-led peace talks and reconciliation with the armed opposition were also essential for stability in the country and the region.[24]

[21]SC/10494, 6690th Meeting (AM), 19 December 2011; SC/10398, 6625th Meeting (AM), 29 September 2011; SC/10408, 6629th Meeting (AM), 12 October 2011; GA/11177, Sixty-sixth General Assembly Plenary, 62nd Meeting (AM), 21 November 2011.

[22]DPB, 24 January 2012; SC/10582, 6735th Meeting (AM), 20 March 2012; SC/10688, 6793rd Meeting (AM), 27 June 2012; SC/10866, 6896th Meeting (PM), 19 December 2012.

[23]SC/10688, 6793rd Meeting (AM), 27 June 2012; SC/10771, 6840th Meeting (PM), 20 September 2012; GA/11315, Sixty-seventh General Assembly General Assembly Plenary 41st Meeting (AM), 27 November 2012.

[24]DPB, 19 February 2013; SC/10943, 6935th Meeting (AM & PM), 19 March 2013.

The United States supported the Afghan-led peace process and called on the Taliban to join it. The opening of a Taliban office in Qatar in 2013 was an important first step. Important global and regional players welcomed the announcement of talks between the Taliban and the United States and between the Taliban and the Afghan High Peace Council in Doha. Despite the controversies and concerns around the Taliban office, the Government was confident about reaching a political solution in peace talks in Doha.[25]

It was, of course, important that Afghanistan did not fall back into the nightmares of war and the extreme poverty and violations of human rights. After decades of war, Afghanistan's football victory in the South Asian Football Federation Championship was welcomed by exuberant celebrations as a sign of the country's gradual return to normalcy and success on the international stage.[26]

In 2014, Afghanistan was in a crucial period of transition. A breakthrough in direct talks between the Government and the Taliban remained elusive. The country held presidential and provincial elections, leading to its first democratic transfer of power. The United Nations had no role in administering the elections. The Taliban made a declaration that it would seek to disrupt the electoral process. Nevertheless, the Afghan people decided to cast their ballot despite the threat and intimidation by extremist and terrorist groups.[27]

Despite the impressive electoral turnout, presidential elections on 5 April and 14 June turned into a protracted political crisis. The two Presidential candidates, Abdullah Abdullah and Ashraf Ghani Ahmadzai, broke the electoral impasse on 12 July 2014, with the agreement facilitated by the US Secretary of State, John Kerry. UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon urged the two presidential candidates to conclude an agreement on a government of national unity in accordance with their commitments.[28]

[25] SC/11041, 6983rd Meeting (AM), 20 June 2013; DPB, 20 June 2013; GA/11457, Sixty-eighth General Assembly Plenary, 54th & 55th Meetings (AM & PM), 20 November 2013.

[26] DSG/SM/680, 3 July 2013; SC/11127, 7035th Meeting (AM), 19 September 2013.

[27] SG/SM/16123-AFG/421, 4 September 2014; SC/11320, 7139th Meeting (AM), 17 March 2014; SC/11347-AFG/411, 5 April 2014.

[28] SC/11565, 7267th Meeting (AM), 18 September 2014; SC/11451, 7208th Meeting (AM), 25 June 2014; DPB, 14 July 2014; SG/SM/16130-AFG/422, 9 September 2014.

Finally, on 21 September 2014, the two presidential candidates signed the agreement to establish a Government of National Unity. Ashraf Ghani Ahmadzai was inaugurated as President of Afghanistan and Abdullah Abdullah was being sworn in as Chief Executive Officer. Protracted deadlock over the result of presidential elections deepened a crisis in the country and underlined the importance of a comprehensive political process to resolve the conflict with the appalling human cost borne by ordinary Afghans.[29]

Conflict-related deaths and injuries of Afghan civilians rose by 22% in 2014 from the year before. The UNAMA documented 10,548 civilian casualties, the highest number of civilian deaths and injuries recorded in a single year since the Mission began systematic monitoring in 2009. For the first time since 2009, more Afghan civilians were killed and wounded in ground engagements than by improvised explosive devices or any other tactic. In 2014, Afghanistan accounted for an estimated 85% of global opium production and 77% of global heroin production.[30]

The International Security and Assistance Force (ISAF) mission in Afghanistan ended at the end of 2014, and a new NATO mission, Operation Resolute Support, was established. The international civilian and military withdrawal coincided with a political transition in Afghanistan.[31]

The international community supported Afghanistan on its path towards peace, reconciliation, democracy and development. The National Unity Government had reached out with a message of peace and reconciliation, not only to the Afghan Taliban but also to neighbouring countries. President Ghani embarked on a process of ending the undeclared state of war between Afghanistan and Pakistan and starting a new era of peace and cooperation. The United States supported reconciliation with the Taliban and Pakistan facilitated dialogue between Kabul and the Afghan Taliban. On 7 July 2015, the Afghan Government and Taliban representatives in Pakistan held talks in Muree, Pakistan.

[29] SC/11572-AFG/423, 21 September 2014; SG/SM/16223-AFG/426, 29 September 2014; SC/11565, 7267th Meeting (AM), 18 September 2014; SC/11712, 7347th Meeting (AM), 18 December 2014; SC/11440, 7198th Meeting (AM), 17 June 2014.

[30] DPB, 18 February 2015; DPB, 17 September 2015.

[31] SC/11817, 7403rd Meeting (AM), 16 March 2015; SC/12175, 7590th & 7591st Meetings (AM), 21 December 2015.

The Secretary-General and the Security Council welcomed the direct talks as a step towards peace and reconciliation. The Security Council expressed its appreciation for the constructive roles played by Pakistan, China and the United States and encouraged the parties in the talks to continue. After a promising start, peace efforts had reached an impasse, the Taliban leadership fragmented, and strains reappeared in relations between Afghanistan and Pakistan. The violence in the country intensified and the conflict continued to take a horrid toll on Afghan civilians. External support to the Taliban and other terrorist groups was motivated mainly by regional rivalry.[32]

2015 had been the bloodiest year in Afghanistan since 2001, with a sharp increase in civilian and military casualties. UNAMA continued to engage with the Government, the Taliban, neighbouring countries and the international community to promote an inter-Afghan peace process. UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon strongly condemned the United States airstrikes in Kunduz, on 3 October 2015, that resulted in the death and injury of medical workers and patients at a *Médecins Sans Frontières* hospital. The capture of Kunduz and 16 other district centres sent an alarming signal that the Taliban and other violent extremists threatened Afghanistan and the region.[33]

Afghanistan was being tested in 2016 as severely as it had been in 2015. More than 11,000 civilian casualties were documented, and some 335,000 people were newly displaced, a 78% increase since 2014. Tensions within the Government surfaced and the relationship between the President and the Chief Executive was dysfunctional. Economic growth remained low and outward migration continued. Afghanistan's security situation continued and grave challenges persisted, including threats by the Taliban, Al-Qaida and Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Da'esh). The Taliban did not demonstrate a clear commitment to

[32]SC/11967-AFG/440, 10 July 2015; SC/11967-AFG/440, 10 July 2015; SC/11936, 7467th Meeting (AM), 22 June 2015; SG/SM/16923-AFG/439, 8 July 2015; SC/12050, 7526th Meeting (AM), 17 September 2015; GA/11733, Seventieth Session, 65th Meeting (AM), 30 November 2015; SC/12175, 7590th & 7591st Meetings (AM), 21 December 2015.

[33]SC/12050, 7526th Meeting (AM), 17 September 2015; SG/SM/17185-AFG/444, 3 October 2015; GA/11733, Seventieth Session, 65th Meeting (AM), 30 November 2015; SG/SM/17420, 16 December 2015; SC/12175, 7590th & 7591st Meetings (AM), 21 December 2015.

the peace process despite many offers by President Ghani and the international community. The intensive fighting showed the conflict to be an endless cycle of gains and reversals, of destruction instead of development for Afghan civilians.[34]

2016 had seen its share of ups and downs. The inauguration of the Turkmenistan–Afghanistan railway, the arrival of a cargo train from China, the construction of the Iran–Afghanistan railway, and the cargo air corridor between Afghanistan and India were reviving economic development and regional connectivity. The Government reached a historic peace agreement with Hizb-i Islami. At the same time, prospects for peace talks with the Taliban were gloomy for the foreseeable future. The Taliban's offensive had intensified, and the cost had been considerable.[35]

Yet, no amount of international support could, by itself, bring peace and security to Afghanistan. Tadamichi Yamamoto, Special Representative of the Secretary General for Afghanistan and Head of the UNAMA, underscored that the conflict had no military solution. He called upon the Taliban to commit to direct talks with the Afghan Government without preconditions. The peace process needed to be inclusive, involving Afghans in all strata of society. The large number of civilian casualties in 2016, as well as the growing needs of returning refugees and internally displaced persons, highlighted the dire humanitarian situation. Security, governance and reform remained key priorities for building Afghanistan in 2017.[36]

Afghanistan continued to struggle with the legacy of three decades of conflict and violent extremism and terrorism. The emergence of new challenges added to the commitment and responsibility of the international community, which had neglected the country after the end of the cold war. The situation in Afghanistan was precarious and the US-led coalition was failing against Taliban. The only way to end the conflict

[34]DPB, 18 March 2016; SC/12283, 7645th Meeting (AM), 15 March 2016; SC/12412, 7722nd Meeting (PM), 21 June 2016; DPB, 25 July 2016; SC/12518, 7771st Meeting (AM), 14 September 2016.

[35]SC/12640, 7844th Meeting, 19 December 2016.

[36]Ibid.

and establish conditions for stability was through a peace and reconciliation process between the Taliban and the Government. The importance of Afghanistan for peace and security in the region and the world could not be overemphasized.[37]

Iraq was another country with the legacy of decades of conflict, punishing sanctions, violent extremism and terrorism, and the presence of foreign troops on its soil whose importance for peace and security in that region tested Ban Ki-moon to the utmost. The country was vital for peace and security in the larger Middle-East and the world. The deteriorating situation in Iraq in 2007 was becoming one of the world's most urgent crises. In March, the UN Secretary-General had, for the first time, described the crisis in Iraq as a humanitarian emergency.[38]

[37] GA/10654, Plenary, 44th & 45th Meetings (AM & PM), 5 November 2007; GA/11858, 47th Meeting (AM), 17 November 2016.

[38] SC/9619, 6094th Meeting (PM), 19 March 2009; SC/8971, 5639th Meeting (PM), 15 March 2007.

Check for updates

CHAPTER 8

Iraq: Trying to Turn a Page

> …Iraq was at the heart of fundamental changes in the region. …what went well in Iraq would be of "tremendous" benefit to the region, especially in reducing the space for extremism. The converse was also true.
>
> Ad Melkert, Special Representative of the Secretary-General[1]

No country has taken more of the United Nations Security Council's time over the 1990–2006 period than Iraq. In 2007, this country stood on the brink of civil war and chaos and increasing numbers of Iraqis had been affected by growing violence, insurgent and terrorist attacks. The ever-present menace of political, sectarian and criminal violence was the grim reality of life in Iraq. The insurgents, extremists and terrorists continued their attacks, to destabilize the Iraqi Government, and force the US-led Multinational Force to withdraw.[2]

New UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon dealt with the Iraqi file on his very first day in office, 2 January 2007. He faced criticism over his mixed message on the death sentence for Saddam Hussein imposed by

[1] SC/10330, 6586th Meeting (AM), 19 July 2011.

[2] SC/9602, 6087th Meeting (AM), 26 February 2009; SC/8940, 12 January 2007; SC/8971, 5639th Meeting (PM), 15 March 2007. The statistics underlined the gravity of the security situation in Iraq: 35,000 civilians had been killed in 2006, or 100 a day, and 36,000 injured. SC/8971, 5639th Meeting (PM), 15 March 2007.

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M. Jesenský, *The United Nations under Ban Ki-moon*,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-12220-1_8

the Iraqi High Tribunal. After a brief controversy, Ban Ki-moon fully endorsed the calls for restraint by the Government of Iraq in the execution of the death sentences.[3]

The Secretary-General described the crisis in Iraq as a humanitarian emergency. He emphasized the importance of establishing a timetable for the withdrawal of foreign troops to restore Iraq's sovereignty and responsibility over its own affairs. Ban Ki-moon also placed a high priority on the restoration of peace and normality, national reconciliation and relations with neighbouring States. The International Compact with Iraq, a joint UN-Iraqi initiative, became a framework for normalization, a grand partnership between Iraq and the international community to consolidate peace and to pursue development.[4]

Iraq confronted significant security challenges and the flow of foreign terrorists and weapons into Iraq was particularly destabilizing. Prime Minister Maliki repeatedly requested an end to foreign interference in Iraq, but the Government deemed the presence of Multinational Force troops vitally necessary, not only for Iraq, but also for regional security and stability.[5]

In June 2007, the Security Council closed the file on Iraq's weapons of mass destruction. The Council noted that all of Iraq's weapons of mass destruction had been rendered harmless and terminated the supervised disarmament of Iraq. The programme started in 1991 and the UN Special Commission (UNSCOM), the UN Monitoring, Verification and Inspection Commission (UNMOVIC) and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and their inspectors maintained sustained attention to Iraq's disarmament. In 2003, the United States and its allies invaded Iraq on controversial charges of existence of proscribed items. Since 2003, the United States' Iraq Survey Group had demonstrated that no stockpile of weapons of mass destruction existed in Iraq. UNMOVIC warned that in Iraq's security environment, non-State actors might seek to acquire toxic agents. There was the reported use by insurgents and terrorists in Iraq of toxic industrial chemicals, such as chlorine.[6]

[3] DPB, 2 January 2007; SG/SM/10831-IK/556, 8 January 2007. Louise Arbour, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, and UN experts expressed concerns about the fairness of the trial and asserted the death sentence would violate Iraq's obligations under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. DPB, 8 February 2007.

[4] SC/8971, 5639th Meeting (PM), 15 March 2007; IK/562, 16 March 2007.

[5] SC/9041, 5693rd Meeting (PM), 13 June 2007.

[6] SC/9064, 5710th Meeting (AM), 29 June 2007.

The overall security situation severely limited the activities of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI). In December 2007, the Prime Minister of Iraq requested the Security Council to extend the mandate of the US-led Multinational Force in Iraq (MNF-I) for the last time. While Iraqis did not desire the presence of foreign troops on their soil one day longer than necessary, the Government stressed that MNF-I, working alongside Iraqi forces, has made an important contribution to security and the rule of law in the country. The Security Council extended the mandate of the MNF-I until 31 December 2008.[7]

In January 2008, Staffan de Mistura became the new Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Iraq. He asserted that 2008 would be a year of sovereignty and responsibility for Iraq, but much was predicated on delivering basic services and security guarantees, as the security situation remained precarious. Some Member States observed that conditions in Iraq had been the direct result of the invasion and occupation, and that reconciliation required a clear horizon for an end to occupation, a major bone of contention among Iraqi factions. Indeed, Iraq was going through a painful transition. The situation in Iraq continued to be alarming, characterized by the insurgency and terrorism, and the flow of foreign fighters and lethal aid into Iraq.[8]

The termination of the mandate of the MNF-I in December 2008 was an important turning point for Iraq and the United Nations. Iraq and the United States had concluded a new security agreement, which placed US forces under Iraq Government authority, and gave a December 2011 timeline for their withdrawal. However, the continued presence of foreign, perceived by some as occupying, forces played a role in instability and hindered national reconciliation in Iraq.[9]

[7] SC/9146, 5763rd Meeting (AM), 19 October 2007; SC/9207, 5808th Meeting (PM), 18 December 2007.

[8] SC/9231, 5823rd Meeting (AM), 21 January 2008; SC/9311, 5878th Meeting (AM), 28 April 2008; SC/9356, 5910th Meeting (AM), 13 June 2008; SC/9415, 5949th Meeting (AM), 6 August 2008. See also the Secretary-General's reports on the UNAMI, UN documents S/2008/19, S/2008/495 and S/2008/266.

[9] SC/9602, 6087th Meeting (AM), 26 February 2009. See also the report of the Secretary-General UN document S/2009/102.

The United States assured that it would continue to support Iraq's development, regardless of the reduction of its military presence. On 30 June 2009, US forces withdrew from Iraqi cities in accordance with the Status of Forces Agreement, starting a new stage in Iraqi–United States relations. Iraq hoped the United Nations would assist it in returning to the international status it had held before the 1990 invasion of Kuwait. In February 2010, the Minister for Foreign Affairs confirmed that Iraq supported the international non-proliferation regime and complied with disarmament treaties and other relevant international instruments. Consequently, the Security Council stated its readiness to consider lifting the trade sanctions imposed on Iraq following Saddam Hussein's invasion of Kuwait in 1990.[10]

Iraq remained an extremely complex operating environment for the United Nations. Although parliamentary elections on 7 March 2010 represented a firm rejection of violence by the clear majority of Iraqis, level of violence in the country made it imperative to create a political environment conducive to meaningful dialogue and power-sharing. Another major challenge was drastic improvement in living conditions. As Iraq was still suffering from the Council-imposed sanctions, the most important issue was to immediately lift all restrictions imposed under Chapter VII. In December 2010, the Security Council adopted resolutions 1956 (2010), 1957 (2010) and 1958 (2010), ending several Chapter VII mandates on Iraq, a major step towards the normalization of its international status.[11]

The Iraqi Council of Representatives endorsed the new Government led by Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki on 31 December 2010, ending the nine-month political stalemate that followed the national elections in March. The new National Partnership Government pledged to build a federal, democratic, pluralist and unified Iraq and to resolve disputed internal boundaries and the status of Kirkuk province with the Kurdistan Regional Government.[12]

[10]SC/9684, 6145th Meeting (AM), 18 June 2009; SC/9723, 6177th Meeting (PM), 4 August 2009; SC/9871, 6279th Meeting (AM), 26 February 2010; S/PRST/2010/5, 26 February 2010.

[11]SC/10330, 6586th Meeting (AM), 19 July 2011; SC/9934, 6320th Meeting (AM), 25 May 2010; SC/9876-IK/620, 8 March 2010; SC/10002, 6368th Meeting (AM), 4 August 2010. See also the Secretary-General's reports UN documents S/2010/240 and S/2010/406.

[12]SC/10220, 6511th Meeting (AM), 8 April 2011. See also the Secretary-General's report S/2011/213.

In December 2011, the Secretary-General welcomed the completion of the withdrawal of the United States forces from Iraq. The withdrawal provided the opportunity to turn a page in Iraq's history and assert its full sovereignty. In March 2012, Iraq hosted the League of Arab States summit in Baghdad, and Iraq and Kuwait normalized their relations with the visit of Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki to its neighbour.[13]

In 2012, Iraq was in the midst of a political stalemate between political blocks over a resolution of internal boundaries and the constitutional issue. In addition, the number of civilian casualties from terrorist attacks was increasing. Since the beginning of 2012, an average of 12 incidents per day had claimed a total of more than 1300 lives. The Secretary-General expressed concern over escalating tensions between political blocs and called on leaders to resolve outstanding issues between the Government of Iraq and the Kurdistan Regional Government, the overdue Kirkuk Governorate Council elections and the adoption of hydrocarbon legislation. Ban Ki-moon met with heads of political blocs in Baghdad and reassured them of the continuing support of the international community.[14]

In 2013, ten years after the invasion and occupation, and less than two years after the withdrawal of US forces, Iraq gradually regained international standing equal to that which it held prior 1990. On 27 February 2013, an Iraqi Airways flight landed at Kuwait International Airport, ending a 22-year suspension in commercial air traffic with Kuwait. And on 27 June 2013, the Security Council removed Iraq from its obligations under Chapter VII of the United Nations Charter concerning the 1990 invasion of Kuwait. This decision recognized that the situation in Iraq was significantly different from 1990.[15]

After the first protest had broken out in Ramadi in December 2012, tens of thousands of protesters in Iraq's western provinces demonstrated in Ramadi, Samarra, Mosul, Falluja, Tikrit and Kirkuk to voice their

[13]SC/10472, 6675th Meeting (AM), 6 December 2011; SC/10604, 6747th Meeting (AM), 10 April 2012. See also the Secretary-General's reports S/2011/736 and S/2012/185.

[14]SC/10716, 6811th Meeting (PM), 19 July 2012. See also the Secretary-General's report S/2012/535; SG/SM/14701-IK/651, 6 December 2012.

[15]SC/10950, 6397th Meeting (AM), 21 March 2013; SC/11050, 6990th Meeting (AM), 27 June 2013; Security Council resolution S/RES/2107 (2013) and the Secretary-General's report document S/2013/357.

grievances. The demonstrations, ongoing for months, spoke to the deep distrust among Shia, Sunnis and Kurds. Terrorists infiltrated demonstrations to stir sectarian tensions and civil war. Terrorist and rebel groups, including Al-Qaida and the Free Syrian Army were active in parts of Iraq. On 4 March 2013, Al-Qaida, in collaboration with the Al-Nusra Front, murdered Iraqis and Syrian soldiers, after they had surrendered to Iraqi authorities.[16]

On 23 April 2013, Iraqi security forces used excessive force against demonstrators in Hawija, Kirkuk Province, killing 45 and injuring another 110 people, almost all of them civilians. This violence unleashed a wave of deadly standoffs and attacks across Iraq, waves of car bombings in predominantly Shiite areas brought the country to a crossroad. The violence in Iraq could not be separated from the conflict in neighbouring Syria. Iraqi armed groups had an increasingly active presence in Syria and the violence had spread to Iraq as Iraqis took up arms against each other in Syria and in Iraq. The conflict in Syria enabled groups such as Al-Qaida to forge links with similar factions fighting in Syria.[17]

The Governments in Iraq and Syria faced the Al-Qaida affiliated organizations, such as the so-called Islamic State in Iraq and the Sham (ISIS), also referred to as the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) or Da'esh, or [Jabhat al] Nusra. Therefore, the Security Council modified its Al-Qaida Sanctions List and on 14 May 2014 listed the Al-Nusrah Front for The People of The Levant, carrying out terrorist and guerrilla operations in Syria, as a separate entity to Al Qaida in Iraq. Alarming deterioration of the security situation in 2013 was ripping apart Iraq's social fabric. The total number of civilian casualties in Iraq in 2013 has been the highest since 2008, with more than 7800 people killed and nearly 18,000 people wounded.[18]

At the end of 2013, fighting broke out in the cities of Fallujah and Ramadi in central Iraq's Anbar Province. Iraqi security forces, local police and tribes fought to defeat Da'esh, the affiliate Al-Qaida group.

[16]SC/10950, 6397th Meeting (AM), 21 March 2013; The Secretary-General's report document S/2013/154.

[17]SC/11065, 7002nd Meeting (PM), 16 July 2013; SG/SM/15191-IK/658, 29 July 2013; SC/11185, 7068th Meeting (AM), 25 November 2013; The Secretary-General's report document S/2013/661.

[18]SC/11397, 14 May 2014; SC/11185, 7068th Meeting (AM), 25 November 2013; The Secretary-General's report document S/2013/661; DPB, 2 January 2014.

Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon urged Iraqi leaders, including Prime Minister Al-Maliki, to promote reconciliation among all different ethnic groups.[19]

In the summer of 2014, Iraq faced the upsurge in violence at the hands of terrorist groups, and the ISIL took control of the cities of Fallujah, Mosul, Tuz Khourmatu, Beiji and Tikrit. UN staff in Baghdad were being relocated temporarily from Baghdad to Amman, Jordan. More than 1 million people have been displaced since the beginning of 2014. Christians, Turkoman, Yazidis and other ethnic and religious communities faced abductions, killings or the destruction of their property, minority communities came under direct attack and persecution by Da'esh and associated armed groups.[20]

By 2014, Da'esh succeeded to control a third of Iraq's territory. On 30 June 2014, the head of Da'esh—Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi—declared an Islamic caliphate, compromising the sovereignty of Iraq and Syria. Da'esh, a splinter group of Al-Qaida, joined in an alliance of convenience by several other groups, battled Iraqi security forces and captured large portions of the Governorates of Ninewa, Anbar, Salaheddine, Kirkuk and parts of Diayala. Iraqis warned that the terrorist threat from Da'esh and Al-Nusra to the region had become reality.[21]

Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon visited Erbil Najaf and Baghdad in Iraq in July 2014 and suggested that the country was facing an existential threat. He urged the Government of Iraq and the Kurdistan Regional Government to put their differences aside and work closely together to address the urgent security needs and to protect the people and territorial integrity of Iraq.[22]

In the fall of 2014, the United States started to build a coalition against Da'esh to help the parties on the ground. The Security Council, at a meeting chaired by US Secretary of State John Kerry,

[19]DPB, 24 January 2014; SC/11245, 7093rd Meeting (PM), 10 January 2014; Presidential Statement S/PRST/2014/1, 10 January 2014; UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon's press conference in New York, SG/SM/15577, 10 January 2014.

[20]SC/11430-IK/671, 5 June 2014; SG/SM/15935-IK/674, 11 June 2014; DPB, 11 June 2014; DPB, 16 June 2014; DPB, 17 June 2014; DPB, 26 June 2014; SG/SM/15987-IK/676, 29 June 2014; SG/SM/16042-IK/678, 20 July 2014.

[21]DPB, 30 June 2014; DPB, 7 July 2014; SC/11488, 7224th Meeting (AM), 23 July 2014; The Secretary-General's latest report on UNAMI (document S/2014/480).

[22]DPB, 24 July 2014; SG/SM/16064-IK/680, 3 August 2014.

urged the international community, in accordance with international law, to strengthen and expand support for the Government of Iraq in its fight against Da'esh and associated armed groups. Frans Timmermans, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands, noted that Da'esh could not be defeated in Iraq alone, but needed to be confronted in Syria, as the group constituted a direct threat to the region.[23] While some observers claimed that the main cause of the crisis in Syria was not terrorism but the marginalization of legitimate opposition groups, the Syrian Government maintained that Syria had been fighting terrorist groups, portrayed as moderate opposition and supported by influential States in the region and elsewhere.[24]

The UN's Al-Qaida/Taliban Monitoring Team estimated that more than 13,000 foreign terrorist fighters from over 80 Member States have joined Da'esh and the Al-Nusra Front. The growing phenomenon of foreign terrorist fighters had grave implications for international peace and security, and its origins, whether it was a consequence or a cause of the conflict in Syria, were hotly debated by the international community.[25]

The international community addressed this phenomenon at a Security Council summit on 24 September 2014 presided over by US President Barack Obama. The Council unanimously adopted resolution 2178 (2014), condemning violent extremism and deciding that Member States should prevent the equipping of individuals to travel for the perpetration, planning of, or participation in terrorist acts. The debate revealed that while national and regional circumstances varied, no country was immune to the threat posed by foreign terrorist fighters. Syria argued there could be no moderate terrorism as compared to extreme terrorism or good terrorist and bad terrorism, terrorism was simply terrorism. The Secretary-General emphasized that all measures taken against terrorism needed to be fully in line with the goals and values and principles of the United Nations. Ban Ki-moon called for a creative and

[23] Press Conference by Security Council President on Work Programme for September (Samantha Powers, United States), 3 September 2014; SC/11571, 7271st Meeting (PM), 19 September 2014.

[24] SC/11520, 7242nd Meeting (PM), 15 August 2014.

[25] SG/SM/16195-SC/11582, 24 September 2014.

comprehensive political strategy in Syria and beyond to stem the flow of foreign terrorist fighters: "Missiles may kill terrorists. But good governance kills terrorism."[26]

Al-Qaida and its affiliated groups were an imminent threat to the Middle East. In 2014 alone, armed conflict and acts of terrorism had killed at least 12,000 civilians and injured more than 23,000. The so-called ISIL/ISIS/Da'esh and the Al-Nusra continued to commit grave crimes, controlled large swathes of territories in Iraq and Syria and complicated efforts to forge political order in these two countries. Most of Da'esh's funds came from its control of oil fields and smuggling of oil worth between $846,000 and $1.6 million per day. The Al-Nusra Front relied more on external donations and kidnapping for ransom. The Security Council condemned any trade with Da'esh, the Al-Nusrah Front and other entities designated to be associated with Al-Qaida under resolutions 1267 (1999) and 1989 (2011).[27]

In February 2015, Da'esh released footage showing the destruction of statues and other artefacts of the Mosul Museum in Iraq. UNESCO's Director-General, Irina Bokova, condemned this as a deliberate attack against Iraq's millennial history and culture, and asked the President of the Security Council to convene an emergency meeting of the Security Council on the protection of Iraq's cultural heritage.[28]

By mid-2015, a third of Iraq still remained under the control and governance of Da'esh and the country faced unprecedented challenges. Despite efforts to fight against it, the flows of foreign terrorist fighters continued. Iraqi military offensives had yet to significantly change the situation on the ground. The situations in Syria and Iraq were linked. It was unrealistic to attempt to stop Da'esh in Iraq alone; it was necessary to take over captured territories by Da'esh in Syria as well, as armed groups did not respect borders.[29]

[26] SC/11580, 7272nd Meeting (PM), 24 September 2014; SG/SM/16195-SC/11582, 24 September 2014.

[27] SC/11656, 7316th Meeting (AM), 19 November 2014; SC/11783, 7383rd Meeting (AM), 17 February 2015; SC/11775, 7379th Meeting (AM), 12 February 2015.

[28] DPB, 26 February 2015.

[29] SC/11892, 7443rd Meeting (AM), 14 May 2015; SC/11978, 7489th Meeting (AM), 22 July 2015.

Tensions arose between Iraq and Turkey amidst the fight against Da'esh terrorist group. Iraq rejected any military operations on its territory without its approval. On 3 December 2015, Turkish forces penetrated into Iraqi territory without the authorization of the Iraqi federal authorities. Iraq requested the Security Council to assume its international legal responsibilities under the Charter to compel Turkey to withdraw their forces which undermined Iraq's sovereignty. The Secretary-General expressed hope the Government of Turkey would ensure that all activities in Iraq were conducted with the full consent of the Government of Iraq.[30]

In March 2016, Ban Ki-moon made his eighth visit to Iraq as Secretary-General of the United Nations. He addressed Iraq's Council of Representatives, in Baghdad, admitting Iraqis were enduring very difficult times. From January 2014 to December 2015 alone nearly 20,000 civilians were killed, more than 3 million Iraqis were displaced from their homes, and 10 million needed urgent humanitarian aid. Violent extremists from ISIL, also known as Da'esh, unleashed and the horrors across the north and west of Iraq. In addition, a profound political crisis paralysed the Government and Council of Representatives. The political crisis added a new layer of complications to the already complex set of military, security, humanitarian, economic and human rights challenges facing Iraq.[31]

2016 was a crucial year for Iraq's intention to take over captured territories by Da'esh. Victories in Fallujah and Qayyarah showed that Iraqis could defeat it. Da'esh and its affiliates continued to experience significant military setbacks, however, the military pressure had resulted in the exodus of greater numbers of foreign terrorist fighters, and the emergence of attacks worldwide. The 14 July attacks in Nice, France, had left more than 80 people dead and scores injured.[32]

[30]SC/12173, 7859th Meeting (Night), 18 December 2015; SC/12244, 7623rd Meeting (PM), 16 February 2016; The Secretary-General's report document S/2016/77; DPB, 6 October 2016.

[31]SG/SM/17630-IK/740, 26 March 2016; SC/12354, 7689th Meeting (AM), 6 May 2016.

[32]SC/12354, 7689th Meeting (AM), 6 May 2016; SC/12447, 7738th Meeting (AM), 15 July 2016; SC/12581, 7804th Meeting (AM), 9 November 2016; SC/12552, 7791st Meeting (PM), 13 October 2016. See also the Secretary-General's reports UN documents S/2016/590 and S/2016/592.

Finally, on 17 October 2016, Iraqi forces, supported by the United States, began the operation to liberate Mosul from Da'esh terrorists. There were reports suggesting that Da'esh forcibly relocated civilians inside the city to effectively use them as human shields in a violation of international humanitarian law. With the start of the operation to liberate Mosul, the UNAMI called on the Iraqi people to support their country's armed forces and to avoid civilian casualties. Ján Kubiš, Special Representative and Head of the UNAMI, declared that the historic battle to liberate Mosul marked the beginning of the end for the so-called Da'esh caliphate in Iraq.[33]

In the decade 2007–2016, Iraqis endured very difficult times. They were recovering from the impact of conflicts and sanctions, where 500,000 people had died from hunger-related causes due to the sanctions imposed against Iraq. The political and security situation evolved after the invasion in 2003. In 2007, the country stood on the brink of civil war and chaos, affected by growing violence, insurgent and terrorist attacks. Subsequently, the ever-present menace of violence became the grim reality of life. Thousands of civilians were killed, millions of Iraqis were displaced from their homes, and more than 10 million needed urgent humanitarian aid. Violent extremists committed war crimes and crimes against humanity. The emergence of Islamic State/Da'esh unleashed horrors across Iraq and Syria. The UNAMI tried to overcome what sometimes appeared to be insurmountable challenges. It helped to turn the page on how the Iraqis viewed the United Nations and the international community, and it also contributed to Iraq's assuming a new standing among the world community as an increasingly stable and sovereign nation. In 2016, with the liberation of territories captured by ISIL/Da'esh, the worst nightmare seemed reaching its end.[34]

Iraq remained at the heart of the region influenced by political and social turmoil known as the "Arab Awakening" or "Arab Spring," which has transformed its geopolitical landscape. From the spring 2011, several

[33]DPB, 28 October 2016; DPB, 18 October 2016; SC/12581, 7804th Meeting (AM), 9 November 2016. See also the Secretary-General reports S/2016/885 and S/2016/897.

[34]SG/SM/17630-IK/740, 26 March 2016; SC/9684, 6145th Meeting (AM), 18 June 2009; SC/10330, 6586th Meeting (AM), 19 July 2011.

Governments in the Middle East and North Africa, the region frequently victim to outside interference, faced the demands of their people for the transition to a new system of governance. Amidst constant reports of escalating violence and bloodshed coming from the Middle East and North Africa, and an imperative that that changes needed to come from within, Libya was one country where events unfolded that caught the attention of the international community, especially the UN and Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon.

Check for updates

CHAPTER 9

Libya: What Went Wrong in 2011?

> The violence of the past year and a half is leading Libya down a path of death, displacement and destruction. Terrorist movements are gaining a strategic foothold. The country has become a haven for criminals and human smugglers.
>
> UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon[1]

In the spring of 2011, the events in Bahrain, Libya, Yemen and other countries, brought reports of escalating violence and heavy-handed response of authorities to the demands of their people. In Libya, the first incidents occurred on 15 and 16 February 2011 in Benghazi, where security forces arrested two lawyers requesting justice for the victims of the 1996 Abu Salim prison massacres. On 17 February, demonstrators protesting against those arrests were dispersed by security forces, killing numerous demonstrators. This was the beginning of a series of similar events across Libya.[2]

On 21 February 2011, the Security Council held consultations on the situation following a request from Libya's Permanent Mission to the United Nations. The eastern part of Libya was reportedly under the control of elements with weapons and ammunition taken from arms

[1] SG/SM/17177, 2 October 2015.

[2] SC/10241, 6528th Meeting (AM), 4 May 2011.

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M. Jesenský, *The United Nations under Ban Ki-moon*,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-12220-1_9

depots. The Secretary-General urged Colonel Muammar al-Qadhafi, the Head of State, to stop violence and the Security Council called on the Government to meet its responsibility to protect (R2P) its own population.[3]

The changes under way in the Middle East were historic. On 22 February, Arab leaders suspended Libya from the League of Arab States (LAS), the first time the League had taken such an action on the domestic situation. On 25 February, the Human Rights Council (HRC) in Geneva established an independent international committee of inquiry and recommended the General Assembly suspend Libya from the HRC. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon briefed the Security Council on peace and security in Africa. He urged the Council to consider concrete action, as the days ahead would be decisive for Libyans, with equally important implications for the wider region. On 26 February, the Security Council demanded an end to the violence and decided to refer the situation in Libya to the International Criminal Court (ICC). The Council unanimously adopted resolution 1970 (2011) imposing an arms embargo on Libya and a travel ban and assets freeze on the Qadhafi family.[4]

The death toll from nearly two weeks of violence in Libya was unknown. Amid ongoing clashes, with anti-Government forces locked in a deadly battle with forces loyal to Muammar Al-Qadhafi, the General Assembly suspended Libya from the HRC. The Secretary-General urged dispatching of an independent international commission of inquiry to Libya. There were reports that Government forces had fired indiscriminately on protesters, reports of planes shot down by the rebel force, and reports of serious clashes between the Government and armed opponents in the west.[5]

[3]DPB, 22 February 2011; SC/10180-AFR/2120, 22 February 2011; SC/10185, 6490th Meeting (PM), 25 February 2011.

[4]SG/SM/13410, 23 February 2011; SG/SM/13418-SC/10186-AFR/2124, 25 February 2011; SC/10187/Rev.1, 6491st Meeting (PM), 26 February 2011. The Council recognized that States not party to the Rome Statute that established the Court had no obligations to cooperate. Brazil expressed strong reservations to this exemption, saying it was not helpful to advance the cause of justice and accountability. Ibid.

[5]DPB, 28 February 2011; SG/SM/13425-GA/11051-AFR/2130, 1 March 2011; Press Conference on Work of ICC, 1 March 2011; GA/11050, Sixty-fifth General Assembly Plenary 76th Meeting (PM), 1 March 2011.

The rebels in Benghazi established a Transitional National Council (TNC), recognized by some countries as the transitional national government in Libya. The Secretary-General's Special Envoy, Abdul Ilah Khatib, in contact with Benghazi, as well as with the authorities in Tripoli, conveyed the international community's calls to cease the fighting and the violence.[6]

Ban Ki-moon urged the Libyan authorities to start the transition to a new democratic system of governance. In his view, the winds of change were sweeping the Middle East and North Africa, from Tunisia to Egypt, Bahrain to Yemen and beyond, and the region's people were demanding new rights and new freedoms. Equally important, he stressed, was for the international community to recognize that change must come from within. It was unclear, whether the Secretary-General supported the political solution for Libya with or without Colonel Qadhafi.[7]

On 17 March 2011, the Security Council imposed a ban on all flights in Libya's airspace, a no-fly zone, and tightened sanctions on the Libyan authorities. The Council adopted resolution 1973 (2011) by a vote of 10 in favour, with 5 abstentions (Brazil, China, Germany, India and Russia). The Council authorized Member States, acting nationally or through regional organizations or arrangements, to take all necessary measures to protect civilians under threat of attack. The resolution's supporters stressed that its objective was solely to protect civilians. The countries who did not support the resolution stressed the resolution was based on very little clear information. Germany argued decisions regarding the use of military force were always extremely difficult to take. The aim should be to promote a political transition in Libya and stop the violence. While Brazil stood in solidarity with all expressing their legitimate demands for better governance, it believed the resolution contemplated measures that went beyond that call.[8]

The Security Council made a historic decision, resolution 1973 (2011) affirmed the international community's determination to fulfil its R2P civilians from violence perpetrated by their own Government.

[6]The designation the TNC changed in the summer 2011 to the National Transitional Council (NTC); SG/SM/13425-GA/11051-AFR/2130, 1 March 2011; DPB, 10 March 2011; SG/SM/13449-AFR/2143, 16 March 2011.

[7]SG/SM/13425-GA/11051-AFR/2130, 1 March 2011; DPB, 25 March 2011.

[8]SC/10200, 6498th Meeting, 17 March 2011.

The Council demanded the immediate establishment of a ceasefire and a complete end to violence against civilians. Libyan authorities were trying hard to ward off military action under 1973 (2011), repeatedly claiming that they have instituted a ceasefire and carried out their obligations. They called for a monitoring team to observe the ceasefire. Ban Ki-moon maintained there was no evidence the Libyan authorities had carried out their obligations under resolutions 1970 (2011) or 1973 (2011).[9]

On 19 March, the United States and European forces initiated air strikes with the objective of establishing a no-fly zone over Libya. The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) commenced an alliance operation in support of an arms embargo. There had been reports of civilian casualties from NATO air strikes. Fierce battles continued on the ground in or around the cities of Ajdabiya, Misratah and Zitan. Libyan authorities claimed that perceived threats from Al-Qaida and Islamist terrorists forced it to act. Tripoli asked for a mechanism to assure that rebel forces respected any ceasefire.[10]

The violence between forces loyal to and opposed to Colonel Muammar Al-Qadhafi continued. Air operations prevented Government forces to enter Benghazi and stopped a humanitarian catastrophe. But air operations alone could not resolve the crisis. The African Union searched for a solution to the crisis. It was unclear whether the settlement would include or exclude Colonel Qadhafi. The arms embargo imposed on Libya caused great controversy. There were reports that the arms were being supplied to the rebels, while the Government was being told to cease fire. The Libyan authorities claimed that whenever they had declared a ceasefire, the rebels had attacked them. The two sides traded accusations of the ceasefire violations.[11]

Abdul Ilah al-Khatib, Special Envoy of the Secretary-General to Libya, continued consultations with the authorities in Tripoli and Benghazi. Both sides were willing to implement a ceasefire but on different terms.

[9]SG/SM/13461-AFR/2146, 21 March 2011; SC/10210, 6505th Meeting (PM), 24 March 2011; SG/SM/13475-SC/10211-AFR/2150, 24 March 2011.

[10]DPB, 23 March 2011; SG/SM/13471-AFR/2149, 23 March 2011; SG/SM/13475-SC/10211-AFR/2150, 24 March 2011.

[11]SG/T/2773, 21 March 2011; DPB, 25 March 2011; SG/SM/13485-AFR/215, 29 March 2011; DPB, 29 March 2011; DPB, 30 March 2011; SG/SM/13508-AFR/2162, 13 April 2011; DPB, 20 April 2011; DPB, 28 April 2011.

While Tripoli insisted that a ceasefire must be accompanied by a halt to NATO aerial attacks, the TNC in Benghazi asserted that a ceasefire would not end the conflict without Qadhafi's departure. For Tripoli, a ceasefire paved the way for a national dialogue on elections, democracy and constitutional reform. The United Nations, in close collaboration with the AU, would coordinate international monitoring for the ceasefire. The TNC in Benghazi provided its road map for a transition and called on the international community to recognize it as its exclusive interlocutor.[12]

The United Nations had established presences in Tripoli, Benghazi and Tobruq. On 30 April 2011, NATO airplanes bombed Colonel Qadhafi's home killing his son and his grandchildren. Afterwards, the UN premises in Tripoli were ransacked and the UN team had been forced to relocate.[13]

As the conflict was tearing Libya apart, the AU tried to reclaim its share of responsibilities in the conflict resolution, but the African leaders were deeply divided. The AU Extraordinary Summit on 25 May, attended by the Secretary-General, stated that only a political solution would promote sustainable peace in Libya. The AU proposed the five-point road map which prescribed immediate cessation of hostilities, facilitation of humanitarian aid and political reform. The Summit expressed surprise at attempts to marginalize Africa in the management of the conflict, as North Africa was feeling the brunt of the crisis.[14]

The AU condemned violence by all parties in Libya and called on the international community to find a political solution and not a military one. Some African countries opposed continued NATO bombing, arguing they did not envision the Government's bombing to be replaced by foreign bombing, in the quest to protect civilians.[15]

[12] SC/10240, 6527th Meeting (PM), 3 May 2011.

[13] SC/10240, 6527th Meeting (PM), 3 May 2011; SC/10244, 9 May 2011; SC/10266, 6541st Meeting (AM), 31 May 2011.

[14] SC/10266, 6541st Meeting (AM), 31 May 2011; SC/10280, 6555th Meeting (AM), 15 June 2011.

[15] Press Conference by South African Minister on Climate Change Convention Conference, 16 June 2011.

On 27 June 2011, the ICC issued arrest warrants for Colonel Muammar al-Qadhafi, his son Saif al-Islam Qadhafi and Libyan intelligence chief Abdullah al-Senussi on charges of crimes against humanity. African countries criticized the decision claiming it undermined their work and the progress achieved.[16]

In the summer of 2011, it was clear that the initiative, although halting, was with the opposition forces, supported at times by NATO air power. Opposition forces advanced towards Tripoli, there were reports of NATO air strikes in the capital itself. Some of the African countries were concerned that NATO was conducting the Libyan campaign with little or no consultations with some of them. Council resolutions 1970 (2011) and 1973 (2011) had the intention to end the crisis in Libya and help the parties find a political solution. The aim had not been regime change. Whatever the initial intention, those resolutions worked to destabilize Libya even further, as evidenced by the deteriorating humanitarian situation, and the destruction of infrastructure. The AU demanded an immediate end to the NATO-led bombing so that humanitarian aid could be delivered. South Africa pointed out that resolution 1973 (2011) had never been about regime change.[17]

At the end of August 2011, the fighting wound down in Libya and the NTC appeared to be largely in control of Tripoli and other cities. Mustafa Abdel-Jalil, Chairman of the National Transitional Council of Libya, expressed appreciation for the United Nations work in Libya and gave assurances to protect people and public institutions, and to maintain law and order. He called on Colonel Qadhafi's forces to cease violence immediately and make way for a smooth transition.[18]

Member States of the LAS, at their extraordinary ministerial session in Cairo on 27 August 2011, agreed that the NTC would fill the seat of Libya at the LAS, and called on the United Nations to allow the NTC to represent Libya. The NTC was formed in February, in the wake of popular protests against Colonel Muammar al-Qadhafi's Government. After much wrangling, the General Assembly of the United Nations overwhelmingly accepted the credentials of Libya's NTC to represent

[16]SC/10297, 6566th Meeting (AM), 27 June 2011; DPB, 29 June 2011.

[17]SC/10297, 6566th Meeting (AM), 27 June 2011; SC/10346, 6595th Meeting (AM), 28 July 2011; DPB, 11 July 2011.

[18]DPB, 22 August 2011; DPB, 23 August 2011; SC/10374, 6606th Meeting (PM), 30 August 2011.

the country. Angola, speaking on behalf of the Southern African Development Community, questioned the legality of the decision. The NTC was in control, but it was not the Government in Libya. Egypt maintained that arguing against the NTC would only prolong the suffering and obstruct the will of the Libyan people.[19]

On 16 September 2011, the Security Council established the United Nations Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL). Council members congratulated the NTC representative on taking Libya's seat. The representative paid tribute to all those who had supported the "responsibility to protect" in Libya through resolutions 1970 (2011) and 1973 (2011). The reported death of Muammar Al-Qadhafi on 20 October 2011, who had ruled Libya since 1969, marked a key moment in the transition. Ian Martin, Special Representative for Libya, reported that Muammar and Motassim Qadhafi were mistreated and killed in circumstances which required investigation. Luis Moreno-Ocampo, Prosecutor of the ICC, confirmed that the affair raised suspicions concerning war crimes.[20]

The declaration of liberation by the National Transitional Council of Libya on 23 October 2011 in Benghazi signalled the end of armed hostilities. UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon declared that from that day onward, the Libyan people would build a truly new Libya, guided by respect for human rights and the rule of law, and with transparent management of Libya's resources to the benefit of all Libyans. On 27 October 2011, the Security Council ended, through the unanimous adoption of resolution 2016 (2011), the authorization under which NATO had conducted an air campaign with the mandated aim of protecting civilians.[21]

After the end of armed hostilities in Libya, there were disturbing reports that killings amounting to war crimes had been committed by both sides. The implementation of resolution 1973 (2011) and various claims regarding civilian casualties of NATO airstrikes led to a split

[19]SG/SM/13764-SC/10375-AFR/2237, 30 August 2011; SG/SM/13816-AFR/2249, 20 September 2011; GA/11137, Sixty-sixth General Assembly Plenary 2nd Meeting (AM), 16 September 2011.

[20]SC/10389, 6620th Meeting (PM), 16 September 2011; Press Conference by Special Representative of Secretary-General for Libya, 20 October 2011; DPB, 26 October 2011; Press Conference by Prosecutor of ICC, 15 December 2011.

[21]SG/SM/13896-AFR/2271, 24 October 2011; SC/10424, 6640th Meeting (AM), 27 October 2011; SC/10459, 6669th Meeting (PM), 28 November 2011.

among the members of the Security Council. Some members believed that NATO had exceeded the mandate provided by resolution 1973 (2011) and used the resolution as a pretext for regime change and at the same time caused harm to the very civilians it claimed to be protecting. Brazil introduced the "responsibility when protecting" concept. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon maintained that the implementation of the "responsibility to protect" concept R2P led to the liberation of Libya. There was a regime change, but he believed that the changes were done by the people, not by the intervention of any foreign forces. NATO carried out its mandate provided under resolution 1973 (2011). Ban Ki-moon's view was criticized as not taking into consideration the positions of all Member States.[22]

In the spring of 2012, the Security Council heard the first concerns about the larger impact of the Libyan crisis. Although the Sahelian countries coped with problems before the crisis, the conflict in Libya had severely exacerbated them. Due to the Libyan upheaval, Governments in the region faced the return of millions of economic migrants, the smuggling of weapons from Libyan stockpiles, terrorist activities, youth unemployment, trafficking in drugs and human beings. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) estimated that more than 1500 people drowned or went missing while attempting to cross the Mediterranean to reach Europe in 2011. The UNHCR also noted a record number of arrivals in Europe via the Mediterranean, more than 58,000 people, with most of them landing in Italy. Stability in Libya and the region hinged on the ability of the Libyan authorities to control the borders, to account for and control the large quantities of arms, and to address the threat of arms trafficking and proliferation.[23]

[22]SC/10422, 6639th Meeting (AM), 26 October 2011; DPB, 16 December 2011; SG/SM/14021, Press Conference by Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, 14 December 2011; DPB, 16 December 2011. At the briefing in Moscow, Spokesman of the Russian Foreign Ministry criticized Ban Ki-moon for his statement on 14 December 2011 regarding NATO's strict adherence to the resolution 1973 as not taking into consideration the positions of all Member States. See DPB, 23 December 2011. The ICC's Commission found that the NATO had not deliberately targeted civilians in Libya. Of a total of 25,944 air sorties and 7642 air-to-surface weapons employed, the Commission cited evidence with respect to five air strikes, which reportedly had produced civilian casualties. See Press Conference by Secretary-General's Special Representative on Libya Elections, 9 July 2012.

[23]SC/10535-AFR/2329, 31 January 2012; SG/SM/14083, Press Conference by Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon at United Nations Headquarters, 25 January 2012; SC/10533, 6709th Meeting, 26 January 2012; DPB, 31 January 2012; SC/10570, 6731st Meeting, 7 March 2012.

The volatile security situation and tensions related to a complex mix of ethnic and political loyalties characterized Libya. In July 2012, the Libyans cast their votes for the new National Congress. The period leading up to the polls was marred by violent incidents, mostly in the east, where grievances over the allocation of seats were advanced as justification for disrupting the elections. On 11 September 2012, the United States diplomatic compound in Benghazi was attacked and burned, with a video insulting to Islam cited as a justification. Four United States diplomats, including the United States Ambassador to Libya, Christopher Stevens, were killed.[24]

In February 2013, Libya marked the second anniversary of its revolution. The country had come a long way, but the security situation since the 2011 uprising remained volatile and precarious. The new Libyan authorities tried to address Libya's security vacuum with a challenging political transition. However, the Government's plans had been met with resistance from certain revolutionary brigades who were not ready to surrender their weapons.[25]

The 2011 regime change and subsequent elections to the General National Congress had led many to assume that the road to prosperity and stability was simple and fast. But following four decades of despotic rule, it was evident that preconceived ideas about political transition were more a recipe for disappointment. There was a growing polarization on the Libyan political scene that reflected an accentuated polarization in public life. Security remained a predominant concern, with armed clashes in Tripoli between rival revolutionary brigades and increased tensions among political, tribal and armed groups in various parts of the country.[26]

Libya challenged, under Article 19 of the Rome Statute, the ICC's jurisdiction to handle cases against Saif al-Islam Qadhafi and former Intelligence Chief Abdullah al-Senussi, arguing that it was able to prosecute them in its domestic legal system. The role of the United Nations in Libya became a source of controversy following the adoption of Security Council resolution 2095 (2013), which extended the mandate

[24]SC/10710, 6807th Meeting, 18 July 2012; SC/10760, 6832nd Meeting, 12 September 2012.

[25]SC/10902, 6912th Meeting, 29 January 2013; SC/10939, 6934th Meeting, 14 March 2013; SC/11175, 7059th Meeting, 14 November 2013.

[26]SC/11036, 6981st Meeting, 18 June 2013; SC/11123, 7031st Meeting, 16 September 2013.

of the UNSMIL mission. The fact that resolution 2095 (2013) was adopted under Chapter VII of the UN Charter raised increased misunderstanding with some being suspicious of intervention by the United Nations.[27]

Two years after Muammar Qadhafi's fall, the situation was not as most Libyans had hoped it would be. The country continued to face serious security challenges and a deep political crisis. The country had yet to create institutions, including a central authority to enforce the law, and its income had declined by more than 70%. Political divisions continued to undermine Libya's transition and considerable differences remained over holding both parliamentary and presidential elections and over the extent of the powers to be granted to the future President. On 19 March 2014, at the request of its Government, the Security Council banned illicit crude oil exports from Libya, to safeguard the country's natural resources.[28]

On 16 May 2014, retired General Khalifa Haftar launched Operation Libya Dignity, a military offensive against groups he had labelled terrorists. Some viewed his move as an attempted coup. The deteriorating security situation cast a shadow over the parliamentary elections on 25 June to select a new Council of Representatives replacing the General National Congress. Some 40% of registered voters went to the polls, but there were boycotts and acts of violence in some areas and voting centres.[29]

The dramatic increase in violence and fighting between rival brigades in Tripoli and its airport forced the withdrawal of the UNSMIL staff. The continuing security void and crisis posed a threat to Libya's transition. Libya could become a failed State kidnapped by radical groups and warlords with far-reaching consequences. The Security Council called on all parties to agree to an immediate ceasefire and called on the democratically elected parliament to agree upon a government.[30]

[27]SC/11000, 6962nd Meeting, 8 May 2013; SC/11036, 6981st Meeting, 18 June 2013.

[28]SC/11311, 7130th Meeting, 10 March 2014; SC/11325, 7142nd Meeting, 19 March 2014; SC/11393, 7173rd Meeting, 13 May 2014.

[29]SC/11433, 7194th Meeting, 9 June 2014; SC/11447-AFR/2914, 23 June 2014; SC/11478, 7218th Meeting, 17 July 2014.

[30]SC/11433, 7194th Meeting, 9 June 2014; DPB, 14 July 2014; SC/11478, 7218th Meeting, 17 July 2014; SC/11537, 7251st Meeting, 27 August 2014; SC/11479-AFR/2937, Press Release on Libya, 17 July 2014.

The UNSMIL thus marked its third anniversary in an atmosphere far from its initial optimism. Armed battles were continuing almost uninterrupted in Tripoli, Benghazi and other parts of the country. Unprecedented violence between rival armed formations displaced more than 300,000 people and destroyed airports, government buildings and other vital infrastructure.[31]

Libya needed a strong Government of national unity with full political support and popular backing, but the country was split between two Governments vying for legitimacy. The UN recognized and supported the legitimacy of the elected House of Representatives and demanded all to respect it. At the same time, the UN also demanded the House to make all Libyans feel represented. The House of Representatives was forced to relocate to Tobruk, and some deputies boycotted its proceedings. The UN continued to recognize the Tobruk parliament, whereas the Libyan Supreme Court declared it invalid.[32]

Extremist groups associated with Al-Qaida had been on the rise in Libya since the end of the revolution in 2011. There were persistent allegations that the so-called Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant/Sham (ISIL/ISIS, also known as Da'esh) had set up training camps in Libya. The dangers of relying on extremist elements materialized, extremists had taken control of constitutional and governmental institutions and triggered a spiral of violence. Human smugglers and migrants were using Libya as a launching area for an unprecedented surge in dangerous crossings of the Mediterranean. The increasing turmoil and lawlessness posed a threat to regional and international peace.[33]

In 2015, in the climate of political polarization and armed hostilities, the United Nations launched a political dialogue process, forging agreement between Tobruk and Tripoli on a road map to end the country's political crisis and military conflict. On 11 July 2015,

[31]SC/11537, 7251st Meeting, 27 August 2014; SC/11560, 7264th Meeting, 15 September 2014; SG/SM/16202-AFR/2975, 25 September 2014.

[32]SG/SM/16202-AFR/2975, 25 September 2014; SG/SM/16249, 11 October 2014; DPB, 6 November 2014; SC/11640, 7306th Meeting, 11 November 2014.

[33]SC/11692, 7335th Meeting, 11 December 2014; DPB, 20 February 2015; SC/11971, 7485th Meeting, 15 July 2015.

representatives of the House of Representatives in Tobruk and officials from Tripoli and Misrata signed the Libyan Political Agreement in Skhirat, Morocco.[34]

As Libya's Government could not extend its authority to the whole country and control its extensive borders, on 9 October 2015, the Security Council authorized Member States for a period of one year to inspect vessels on the high seas off the coast of Libya suspected of being used for migrant smuggling or human trafficking. The Council authorized Member States to seize vessels used for migrant smuggling of human trafficking from Libya. The authorization provided the necessary legal base for the European Union's naval operations.[35]

UNSMIL continued to facilitate the ongoing dialogue between the House of Representatives in Tobruk and the General National Congress in Tripoli towards a coalition government. On 17 December 2015, participants in this United Nations-facilitated Libyan political dialogue signed in Skhirat the historic Libyan Political Agreement on the establishment of a single Government of National Accord and national institutions to ensure broad representation. The Security Council, unanimously adopting resolution 2259 (2015), endorsed the Government of National Accord as the sole legitimate Government of Libya and called on Member States to cease support to and official contact with parallel institutions outside of the Political Agreement.[36]

The year 2016 marked the fifth anniversary of the Libyan revolution and the intervention in Libya, an action viewed by many as the first practical application of the R2P concept. It was clear that different opinions remained on the concept, its selective application and the revolution as well. The UNSMIL noted that Libya still had no effective State institutions and the political and military vacuum in the country was allowing terrorist groups and criminal networks to establish deep roots. At times, Libya had three competing governments. Insecurity, economic crisis,

[34]SC/11788, 7387th Meeting, 18 February 2015; DPB, 20 February 2015; SG/SM/16930-AFR/3177, 12 July 2015; SC/11971, 7485th Meeting, 15 July 2015; SG/SM/17177, 2 October 2015.

[35]SC/12072, 7532nd Meeting, 9 October 2015.

[36]SC/12039, 7520th Meeting, 10 September 2015; SC/12105, 7549th Meeting, 5 November 2015; SC/12106, 7550th Meeting, 5 November 2015; SC/12156, 7577th Meeting, 11 December 2015; SG/SM/17426-AFR/3292, 17 December 2015; SC/12185, 7598th Meeting, 23 December 2015.

humanitarian disaster and political stalemate remained the hallmarks of the situation. UNSMIL had to remain based in Tunis, and the Special Representative and other UN staff travelled in and out of Libya on an almost daily basis.[37]

Hence, the sense of hope and optimism felt in Libya following the signing of the Political Agreement was giving way to a growing sense of impatience and concern. Libya remained without a formally endorsed Government and implementation of the Political Agreement had stalled. The country needed a functioning Government, ministries and bureaucracy, and the Libyan Political Agreement of 17 December 2015 remained the sole legitimate framework for managing a national political transition.[38]

In 2016, Libya remained a launch pad for thousands of migrants. More than 112,000 migrants had reached Italy's shores, while at least 3000 migrants had drowned and many more had died in the desert. The Security Council authorized Member States to intercept vessels off the coast of Libya and on the high seas suspected of being used for illicit activities. The waves of migration were unprecedented in human history and Libya was at the very heart of those waves because of its geographic location between destabilized and poor countries and Europe.[39]

Although some progress was made, Libya continued to face serious challenges one year after the signing of the Political Agreement. Pretender governments competed for power and recognition and a fragmented security situation allowed criminal and terrorist networks to flourish. Libya was awash with weapons to the tune of some 20 million pieces of weaponry in a land of 6 million people. Furthermore, the country faced an economic collapse. Almost one year since its signature, the Libyan Political Agreement waited for the House of Representatives to endorse the Constitutional Declaration amendment, a necessary step towards political consolidation.[40]

[37]GA/11764, Seventieth Session, Thematic Panel, 26 February 2016; SC/12270, 7640th Meeting (AM), 2 March 2016; DPB, 2 May 2016; DPB, 17 May 2016; SC/12377, 7698th Meeting (AM), 26 May 2016.

[38]SC/12390, 7706th Meeting (PM), 6 June 2016.

[39]SC/12515, 7769th Meeting (PM), 13 September 2016; SC/12543, 7783rd Meeting (PM), 6 October 2016.

[40]SC/12390, 7706th Meeting (PM), 6 June 2016; SC/12611, 6 December 2016, 7827th Meeting (AM); SC/12613, 7 December 2016.

On 13 December 2016, the Security Council decided to extend the mandate of the UNSMIL by nine months. Libya continued to face a daunting set of challenges and the prospect of UNSMIL's return to the country remained unclear. There was some progress made in the fight against terrorism, with the completion of operations against Da'esh in Sirte, but Libya continued to face a daunting set of challenges. In view of weak developments, the stalemate in Libya remained a threat to the region. Therefore, the Security Council recalled that the situation in Libya continued to constitute a threat to international peace and security. Hope remained that in 2017 Libya could hold a referendum on a new constitution and elect a new Government.[41]

UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon remarked on 25 February 2011 during the Security Council debate on peace and security in Africa: "We meet at a critical moment, potentially a defining moment for the Arab world. Fundamental issues of peace and stability are at stake, most immediately at this moment in Libya."[42] Indeed, the hours and the days ahead were decisive for Libyans and their country, with equally important implications for the wider region. The transition to a new system of governance in Libya started. The Secretary-General cautioned that for much of their history, the societies of the Middle East and North Africa were victim to outside interference in their daily lives and culture. Therefore, it was imperative that the international community recognized that change needed to come from within.[43]

In February 2011, Libya was the subject of the first-ever unanimously adopted Security Council resolution referring to the R2P concept. Thereafter, the Council adopted resolution 1973 (2011), which authorized Member States to protect civilians. That intervention generated lively debates and it also raised serious politically related questions. Some Member States felt that non-coercive measures were not given sufficient

[41]SC/12583, 7806th Meeting (PM), 9 November 2016; SC/12622, 7832nd Meeting (AM), 13 December 2016.

[42]SG/SM/13418-SC/10186-AFR/2124, 25 February 2011.

[43]SG/SM/13425-GA/11051-AFR/2130, 1 March 2011; SG/SM/13418-SC/10186-AFR/2124, 25 February 2011.

time to demonstrate results in Libya. Others felt that Member States implementing resolution 1973 (2011) exceeded their mandate by taking sides in the fighting. Nevertheless, many observers, Ban Ki-moon among them, believed that a timely and decisive response helped to address immediate threats. The intervention in Libya became a setback in the sense that it reinforced caution, and indeed scepticism, about the use of and reference to the R2P. As a result, Member States have shied away from invoking R2P in the Security Council discussions when the popular protests and escalating violence and bloodshed affected the situation in Syria, where, not surprisingly, the issue of the R2P came up.[44]

[44]DSG/SM/1031, 8 December 2016.

Check for updates

CHAPTER 10

Syria: *Khalas*, Enough

> …if you [Al-Qaida or Al-Nusrah] did decide to leave, in dignity, and with your weapons, to Idlib, or anywhere you wanted to go, I personally, I am ready physically to accompany you.
>
> UN Special Envoy for Syria Staffan de Mistura[1]

In the spring of 2011 a wave of protests affected many countries from the Maghreb to the Gulf, from Tunisia to Bahrain. The anti-Government demonstrations in Syria started in March 2011 and gradually increased in geographic scope, participation and demands, and eventually included calls for a regime change. Violence during demonstrations resulted in the deaths of both protestors and law enforcement personnel. The Syrian authorities had reacted with a mix of reform measures, and increasingly violent repression.[2]

On 27 April 2011, the Security Council held its first debate on the situation in Syria. Virtually all speakers called for an immediate end to the violence, some called for an independent investigation into the killings. Others, including Lebanon's delegate, expressed support for Syria's sovereignty and territorial integrity. The Syrian authorities claimed the

[1] Press conference by UN Special Envoy for Syria, Staffan de Mistura and UN Senior Adviser, Jan Egeland, Geneva, 6 October 2016; DPB, 6 October 2016.

[2] Press Conference by United Nations Special Coordinator for Lebanon, Michael Williams, 29 March 2011; B. Lynn Pascoe, Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs, SC/10235, 6524th Meeting (PM), 27 April 2011.

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M. Jesenský, *The United Nations under Ban Ki-moon*,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-12220-1_10

violence was perpetrated by extremist groups, attacking Government installations, army and law enforcement facilities, aiming to overthrow the Government. As a result, some States were trying to interfere under the rubric of the responsibility to protect and humanitarian intervention.[3]

The world watched the deteriorating situation in Syria with concern. United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon insisted that the killing of peaceful demonstrators was unacceptable and should be investigated and underlined that violence from any side was deplorable. President Bashar al-Assad announced the programme of reforms and lifted the state of emergency in Syria. The President of the United States, Barack Obama, called on President Assad to step down. The Security Council action on Syria remained under a shadow of its resolution 1973 (2011), which has led to regime change in Libya. Secretary-General, speaking firmly when it came to Libya, has not been as firm regarding Syria. Many countries remained cautious of going down the same road and were averse to the adoption of a text with an exacerbating effect.[4]

On 3 August 2011, the Security Council called for an immediate end to violence in Syria. Lebanon disassociated itself from the Council statement, arguing the text did not help to address the existing situation in Syria. The United States called for tough, targeted sanctions and an arms embargo. India stated all States had to respect the aspirations of their citizens, but they also had to protect those citizens when dissident groups took violent action. The international community should facilitate dialogue and not threaten sanctions or regime change.[5]

The League of Arab States (LAS) took initiatives to promote a solution to the situation in Syria in an Arab context. Its plan called for political dialogue between the Syrian Government and the opposition, under League auspices. The Syrian Government allowed the deployment of the LAS observer mission, the first in its history. However, the LAS suspended the observer mission on 28 January 2012 amidst escalating violence. The United States, the United Kingdom, France and other Member States then pressed for a resolution supporting the LAS plan, which called on

[3] SC/10235, 6524th Meeting (PM), 27 April 2011.

[4] DPB, 11 April 2011; SG/SM/13622, Press Conference by Secretary-General, 6 June 2011; DPB, 18 August 2011; Press Conference by Security Council President, Hardeep Singh Puri (India), on Work Programme, 2 August 2011.

[5] SC/10403, 6627th Meeting (Night), 4 October 2011.

Syria's President to step aside. Russia and China continued to oppose any action hinting at regime change, coercive measures or other foreign interference in Syria, warning of destabilization in the region. On 4 February 2012 Russia and China vetoed a draft resolution demanding the Syrian Government to implement the elements of the LAS plan.[6]

Divisions among Member States remained over the way forward and how to bring an early end to the violence in Syria. Several Member States claimed the scale of the violence had made the international community's "responsibility to protect" urgent. Yet several other Member States categorically rejected foreign intervention and called for political dialogue among the Syrian parties. Navi Pillay, United Nations High Commissioner of Human Rights, noted the extreme difficulty in ascertaining the exact number of victims in Syria. While the protests remained largely peaceful, reports of armed opposition attacks against Syrian forces increased. There were also reports that Al-Qaida was responsible for the suicide bombings in Damascus and Aleppo. The Security Council condemned the terrorist attacks and the attacks against embassies in Damascus.[7]

On 23 February 2012, Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon and the LAS Secretary-General Nabil Elaraby, announced the appointment of former United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan as the Joint Special Envoy of the United Nations and the LAS on the Syrian crisis. Annan's six-point peace plan for Syria did not include the political transition demanded by the LAS plan. Annan maintained that President Assad's future was a decision for to the Syrian people to make.[8]

In March 2012, the Secretary-General reported to the General Assembly that Damascus had failed to deliver on its responsibility to protect its people. On 2 March 2012, the Security Council met to discuss the challenges posed by the dramatic changes in the Middle East and North Africa. The Secretary-General called for a peaceful and early transfer of

[6]GA/11206, Sixty-sixth General Assembly Plenary, 95th & 96th Meeting (AM & PM), 13 February 2012; SC/10534, 6710th Meeting (PM), 31 January 2012; SG/SM/14093-SC/10537, 4 February 2012; SC/10536, Security Council 6711th Meeting (AM), 4 February 2012. For the LAS plan, see the UN document S/2012/71, 30 January 2012.

[7]SG/SM/13699, 12 July 2011; SC/10506, 23 December 2011; GA/11206, Sixty-sixth General Assembly, Plenary, 95th & 96th Meeting (AM & PM), 13 February 2012.

[8]SG/SM/14124, 23 February 2012; DPB, 29 March 2012.

power to a civilian Government in Egypt and for a meaningful reform process in Bahrain. Ban Ki-moon maintained that the disproportionate use of force by the Syrian authorities had driven largely peaceful opposition forces to resort to take up arms. He also stressed that armed extremist groups had used the situation to carry out terrorist acts. He urged President Bashar Al-Assad to act swiftly in response to Annan's proposals.[9]

On 21 March 2012, the Security Council adopted a presidential statement calling on the Syrian Government and opposition to immediately implement the six-point plan by Kofi Annan. This unified position marked a turning point in the international community's response to the crisis in Syria. One month later, the Security Council authorized a United Nations Supervision Mission in Syria (UNSMIS) of up to 300 unarmed military observers to monitor a cessation of armed violence and the implementation of the Annan plan. The United States warned it would not support the UNSMIS if there was not a cessation of violence. Annan's plan unified the international community around it. The plan provided an opportunity for political engagement between the Government and those seeking change.[10]

However, United Nations observers in Syria operated under difficult and challenging conditions. They were confronted by angry crowds and their vehicles were fired upon. On 9 May 2012, an explosion occurred in the vicinity of a convoy with the Head of the UN Mission, Major General Robert Mood of Norway. Syrian soldiers escorting the convoy sustained injuries.[11] Both the Government and the opposition accused both sides of perpetrating explosions. The Secretary-General shared the concern that terrorist groups were already taking advantage of the continued violence. There were reports that Al-Qaida was fighting alongside the opposition in Syria.[12]

[9]GA/11210, Sixty-sixth General Assembly, Plenary, 99th Meeting (PM), 2 March 2012; SC/10575, 6734th Meeting (AM), 12 March 2012.

[10]SC/10583, 21 March 2012, 6736th Meeting (AM); SG/SM/14179-SC/10587, 21 March 2012; SC/10601, 6746th Meeting (AM), 5 April 2012; SC/10618, 6756th Meeting (AM), 21 April 2012; DPB, 4 May 2012; SG/SM/14277-GA/11231, 9 May 2012.

[11]SG/SM/14275, 9 May 2012; DPB, 9 May 2012; DPB, 14–15 May 2012; DPB, 18 May 2012; DPB, 12 June 2012.

[12]DPB, 10 May 2012; DPB, 18 May 2012; DPB, 25 May 2012; DPB, 29 May 2012; Li Baodong, Press Conference by Security Council President on Work Programme for June, 4 June 2012.

The situation in Syria continued to deteriorate. Many elements of the opposition had turned to arms and declared that they would no longer respect the Annan plan and that the Government was not living up to its commitments. On 18 June 2012, in response to the intensification of armed violence, Major General Mood suspended UNSMIS activities. He sought a commitment by both the Government and the opposition to the observers' security and freedom of movement. The Government expressed that commitment, but Mood had not seen the same statement from the opposition.[13]

Subsequently, the Annan plan was modified. On 30 June 2012 in Geneva, the Action Group for Syria proposed establishment of a transitional governing body, as part of a Syrian-led political transition. On 19 July 2012, the Security Council failed to extend the mandate of the UNSMIS. China and Russia voted against the resolution, which would have threatened sanctions on Syria. China noted that a few countries had been eager to interfere in the internal affairs of Syria and questioned the sincerity of those countries in ending the crisis through a Syrian-led political process. On 20 July 2012, just hours before the expiration of the 90-day mandate, the Security Council agreed to keep the UNSMIS in place for a final 30 days.[14]

Ban Ki-moon maintained that despite the deteriorating security environment the UNSMIS played an essential role in monitoring the situation. Tragically, the crisis in Syria continued to deteriorate. Both the opposition forces and the Government relied on ever-increasing violence. The divided Security Council became an obstacle to diplomacy. At the end of August 2012, the UNSMIS mandate expired and Kofi Annan stepped down as Joint Special Envoy for Syria.[15]

As the overall situation continued to deteriorate, the focus shifted from the armed conflict to the plight of Syrians. In August 2012, the number of refugees fleeing Syria rose sharply, to more than 100,000 people,

[13]DPB, 7 June 2012; GA/11250, Sixty-fifth General Assembly Informal Plenary AM Meeting, 7 June 2012; DPB, 18 June 2012; DPB, 20 June 2012.

[14]DPB, 26 June 2012; SG/SM/14392, 2 July 2012; DPB, 10 July 2012; SC/10714, 6810th Meeting (AM), 19 July 2012; SC/10718, 6812th Meeting (AM), 20 July 2012.

[15]SG/SM/14441, 2 August 2012; GA/11266/Rev.1, Sixty-sixth General Assembly, Plenary, 124th & 125th Meetings (AM & PM), 3 August 2012; SC/10752, 6826th Meeting (PM), 30 August 2012; GA/11268, Sixty-sixth General Assembly, Plenary, 126th Meeting (PM), 4 September 2012.

the highest monthly total of the crisis. The number of Syrians fleeing the country continued to grow: in December 2012, at a rate of 3000 a day, in January 2013, 5000, and since February 2013, 8000 people.[16]

The International Commission of Inquiry on Syria, set up by the Human Rights Council in Geneva, reported the presence of foreign radical Islamists, or Jihadists, fighting against the Government forces in Syria. The rebels were losing their credibility by committing all kinds of human rights abuses. On 6 March 2013, the Security Council strongly condemned the detention of the 21 United Nations Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF) military personnel by the Syrian opposition. Although the Yarmouk Martyrs Brigade eventually released UN peacekeepers, after the assistance of Qatar and of others, Austria decided to withdraw its troops from the UNDOF.[17]

On 19 March 2013, Syria requested an independent investigation into possible chemical weapons use by opposition forces in Khan al-Assal. Two days later, France and the United Kingdom also requested an investigation into several incidents of alleged use of chemical weapons. On 21 March 2013, the Secretary-General established a United Nations investigation on the possible use of chemical weapons in Syria and appointed Professor Åke Sellström of Sweden to head the UN fact-finding mission.[18]

On 7 May 2013, the Russian Federation and the United States announced the agreement to convene an international conference to bring the Syrian parties to a negotiating table and to operationalize the 30 June 2012 Geneva Communiqué on establishing a transitional governing body with full executive powers. The Secretary-General and Joint Special Representative Lakhdar Brahimi, who had succeeded Annan, welcomed a negotiated political solution as the only way to end the crisis in Syria.[19]

[16]DPB, 4 September 2012; SC/10981, 6949th Meeting (AM), 18 April 2013.

[17]Press Conference on Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Syria, 16 October 2012; DPB, 9 November 2012; SC/10933-PKO/330, 6 March 2013; SC/10962-PKO/334, 27 March 2013; DPB, 8 May 2013; DPB, 13 May 2013; SG/SM/15017-PKO/344, 13 May 2013; SG/SM/15084-PKO/353, 6 June 2013; DPB, 7 June 2013.

[18]DPB, 21–22 March 2013; DPB, 26 March 2013; Press Conference by Permanent Representative of Syria, 30 April 2013; DPB, 6–7 May 2013.

[19]SG/SM/15013, 8 May 2013; DPB, 17 May 2013; SG/SM/15058, 28 May 2013.

On 21 August 2013, the reports of the alleged use of chemical weapons in the Ghouta area of Damascus shocked the world. Ban Ki-moon instructed Åke Sellström and his mission in Damascus to swiftly investigate the incident. The Secretary-General urged it was essential to establish the facts and to give diplomacy a chance. The United Nations mission was uniquely capable of establishing in an impartial and credible manner the facts of any use of chemical weapons based directly on evidence collected on the ground. Ban Ki-moon pleaded for restraint and adherence to the United Nations Charter.[20]

Following the horrendous attack in Damascus, the United States, France and some other countries argued for military action against Syria to prevent future uses of chemical weapons. Ban Ki-moon made clear that everything should be handled within the framework of the UN Charter. The use of force was lawful only when in exercise of self-defence in accordance with Article 51 of the UN Charter or when the Security Council approved such action. Ban Ki-moon, former Secretary-General Kofi Annan and Joint Special Representative Lakhdar Brahimi opposed a military strike in Syria without the approval of the Security Council.[21]

The report of the United Nations Mission to Investigate Allegations of the Use of Chemical Weapons on 21 August in the Ghouta area of Damascus concluded that chemical weapons were used on a relatively large scale. The attack resulted in numerous casualties and the Mission confirmed the use of sarin. The Mission's mandate was to find out whether chemical weapons were used, not to investigate responsibility.[22]

In September 2013, the Russian Federation and the United States reached an understanding regarding the safeguarding and destruction of Syria's chemical weapons stockpiles. Afterwards, the Security Council unanimously adopted resolution 2118 (2013), calling for the expeditious and verifiable destruction of Syria's chemical weapons. The Council also

[20]SG/SM/15227, 21 August 2013; SG/SM/15228, 22 August 2013; DPB, 23 August 2013; SG/SM/15237, 25 August 2013; DPB, 28 August 2013; SG/SM/15240, 28 August 2013; DPB, 30 August 2013.

[21]DPB, 1 September 2013; SG/SM/15251, Press Encounter by Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon at United Nations Headquarters, 3 September 2013; DPB, 3 September 2013; DPB, 5–6 September 2013.

[22]DPB, 13 December 2013; Press Conference on Mission to Investigate Alleged Chemical Weapons Use in Syria, 13 December 2013.

endorsed the Geneva Communiqué of 30 June 2012 and called for the convening, as soon as possible, of an international conference on Syria to implement it.[23]

Hoping to build on the diplomatic momentum and move quickly to a political solution, the Secretary-General convened an international conference on Syria. Negotiations between the two Syrian parties, facilitated by Joint Special Representative Lakhdar Brahimi, started at the Palais des Nations in Geneva on 24 January 2014. For the first time, the Syrian Government and the opposition, countries of the region, and the wider international community met to seek a political solution to the Syrian crisis. However, the conference wrapped up without results and Lakhdar Brahimi apologized to the people of Syria for the lack of progress.[24]

After that, violence in Syria has escalated to an unprecedented level. Government forces had been making slow but significant gains; meanwhile, non-State armed groups had been losing ground. On 14 May 2014, the Security Council Committee pursuant to resolutions 1267 (1999) and 1989 (2011) enacted the amendments to its Al-Qaida Sanctions List. The Security Council listed the Al-Nusrah Front (ANF) for The People of The Levant, referred to as an opposition group, as a separate entity to Al Qaida in Iraq. On 22 May 2014, the Security Council failed to adopt a resolution referring Syria to the International Criminal Court due to 2 votes against by China and Russia.[25]

On 20 June 2014, UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon presented his way forward to end the violence and to start a political process in Syria. He urged the Security Council to impose an arms embargo and criticized parties in Syria that were committing atrocities and flagrantly violating human rights and international law. Ban Ki-moon called on the Syrian Government, as well as the armed opposition and extremist groups, to immediately release all individuals arbitrarily detained. He noted that the

[23]SG/SM/15278, 14 September 2013; SG/SM/15289-GA/11417, 17 September 2013; SC/11135, Security Council 7038th Meeting (PM), 27 September 2013. The Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons-United Nations Joint Mission completed the destruction and removal of the declared chemical weapons in Syria on 23 June 2014. SG/SM/15968-DC/3510, 23 June 2014.

[24]SG/SM/15289-GA/11417, 17 September 2013; SG/SM/15494, 25 November 2013; SG/SM/15571, 6 January 2014; SG/SM/15602, 22 January 2014; DPB, 18 February 2014.

[25]DPB, 17 June 2014; SC/11397, 14 May 2014; SC/11407, 7180th Meeting (AM), 22 May 2014.

conflict had created fertile ground for radical armed groups from within and outside Syria, including Al-Qaida or other extremist groups, and had increased the level of the violence and exacerbated sectarian violence. The Secretary-General argued that the greatest obstacle to ending the war in Syria was the notion that it could be won militarily.[26]

July 2014 was the deadliest month in Syria since the start of the conflict in March 2011. The so-called Islamic State (ISIL/Da'esh) and the Al-Nusra Front (ANL) were advancing and taking violence against civilians to a new level. The ANL and armed non-State actors attacked the UNDOF positions in the Golan Heights and detained or restricted movement of UNDOF peacekeepers from Fiji and the Philippines. The Security Council urged Member States with influence on non-State armed actors the need to immediately halt all activities against UN peacekeepers.[27]

In September 2014, the terrorist group Da'esh intensified its offensive in Iraq and Syria. United States President Barack Obama announced the formation of a broad coalition to fight Da'esh in Iraq and Syria, and Staffan de Mistura, the new Special Envoy for Syria, urged the international community to defend the Kurds in Kobane, also known as Ayn al-Arab, on Syria's northern border. President Obama presided over the Security Council summit on preventing the international flow of terrorist fighters. As more than 13,000 foreign terrorist fighters from more than 80 Member States had joined Da'esh and the ANL in 2013, the Council underscored the urgent need to prevent the travel and support for foreign terrorist fighters associated with the so-called Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (Da'esh/ISIL), ANL and other affiliates or splinter groups of Al-Qaida.[28]

[26] DPB, 20 June 2014; SG/SM/15965, 20 June 2014. The Secretary-General presented six main priorities for the way forward in Syria: to end the violence; for the international community to do its utmost to protect people and their human rights; to start a serious political process for a new Syria; to have accountability for serious crimes; and to finish the destruction of chemical weapons in Syria; and also, to address the regional dimensions of the conflict, including the extremist threat. Ban Ki-moon urged the Security Council to impose an arms embargo. Ibid.

[27] SC/11539, 7252nd Meeting (AM), 28 August 2014; DPB, 28 August 2014; SC/11540-PKO/428, 28 August 2014; SC/11546-PKO/431, 30 August 2014; SG/SM/16109-PKO/430, 30 August 2014; DPB, September 2014; SG/SM/16139-PKO/435, 11 September 2014; SC/11570, 7270th Meeting (AM), 19 September 2014.

[28] DPB, 5 September 2014; DPB, 9 September 2014; DPB, 11 September 2014; SG/SM/16150, 16 September 2014; SC/11580, 7272nd Meeting (PM), 24 September 2014; DPB, 8 October 2014.

In 2015, UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon instructed his Special Envoy for Syria, Staffan de Mistura, to intensify efforts by the United Nations to find a political settlement to the conflict. After the failure of the Aleppo freeze, de Mistura started a series of consultations with Syrian and other parties to operationalize the Geneva Communiqué. The Communiqué, endorsed by the Security Council in resolution 2118 (2013), was the only internationally agreed basis for a political settlement and contained principles and guidelines to end the violence and launch a Syrian-led political process. Syrian interlocutors lamented that their country was caught in a regional proxy war that was beyond Syrians' ability to resolve by themselves. The major stumbling block in the political process remained a Transitional Governing Body with full executive powers, the top priority for the opposition, while being unconstitutional institution for the Syrian Government.[29]

In 2015, Syria continued to sink deeper into violence and brutality. The crisis was a refugee emergency and had links to regional and global security. After the repeated uses of chlorine as a weapon, the Security Council decided to establish for one year a Joint Investigative Mechanism of the UN and the OPCW to identify those individuals, entities, groups or Governments involved in the use of chemicals as weapons in Syria. On 30 September 2015, Russia undertook first air strikes in Syria at the request of the Syrian Government. As a result, the United States and Russia were both bombing targets inside Syria. Soon after, Saudi Arabia announced the creation of its own coalition to fight Da'esh.[30]

On 18 December 2015, the Security Council unanimously adopted resolution 2254 (2015), endorsing a road map for a peace process in Syria and setting out a timetable for United Nations-facilitated talks between the Government and opposition members. Negotiations were meant to facilitate a transition to a democratic, secular Government in six months and elections in 18 months. However, there were sharp differences in the international community about the future of President Bashar al-Assad. Nevertheless, after five years, there was a glimmer of

[29]DPB, 15 January 2015; DPB 13 February 2015; DPB, 5 and 11 May 2015; SG/SM/16977-SC/11989, 29 July 2015.

[30]SC/12001, 7501st Meeting, 7 August 2015; DPB, 30 September 2015; DPB, 7 October 2015; DPB, 15 December 2015; SC/12176, 7592nd Meeting, 21 December 2015.

hope for achieving a political solution to the conflict. Ban Ki-moon welcomed the first Security Council resolution focused on the political path to resolving the crisis.[31]

After five years of fighting, Syria represented an extraordinarily complicated theatre of war and one of the largest modern humanitarian crises. The World Food Programme estimated that half a million people in 18 besieged areas had been cut off from food and other crucial assistance. Half of the besieged population, some 200,000 people, were trapped in Deir-ez-Zor, besieged by Da'esh.[32]

On 11 February 2016 in Munich, the United States and the Russian Federation, the Co-chairs of the International Syria Support Group, announced an agreement to commence humanitarian access to besieged areas. Two weeks later, the Security Council unanimously adopted resolution 2268 (2016), endorsing the cessation of hostilities agreement aimed at ending five years of bloodshed in Syria. The agreement required the parties to participate in all United Nations-facilitated political negotiations, cease attacks with any weapons, refrain from acquiring or seeking to obtain new territory, and allow humanitarian access. The Cessation of Hostilities in Syria began at 00:00 Damascus time on 27 February 2016.[33]

The cessation of hostilities provided a much-needed moment of respite, but the situation was at risk of slipping backwards if the international community failed to work towards a sustainable political solution. Reluctance on the part of certain actors to advance the talks, allowed ANL and Al-Qaida to gain ground and recruit armed groups into their ranks. The so-called Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (Da'esh) advanced and fighting in and around Aleppo escalated. Government aerial bombardment of Aleppo caused widespread carnage. Joint military operations by parties to the cessation of hostilities and those outside it, including the ANL, presented a major challenge to stabilizing the situation.[34]

[31]SC/12171, 7588th Meeting, 18 December 2015; SG/SM/17429-SC/12172, 18 December 2015.

[32]SC/12261, 7634th SC Meeting, 26 February 2016; SC/12203, 7605th Meeting (PM), 15 January 2016; SC/12223, 7612th Meeting (AM), 27 January 2016.

[33]SC/12258, 7631st Meeting, 24 February 2016; SC/12261, 7634th SC Meeting, 26 February 2016; SG/SM/17564-SC/12262, 26 February 2016.

[34]SC/12343, 7682nd Meeting, 28 April 2016; SG/SM/17724, 2 May 2016; SC/12351, 7687th Meeting, 4 May 2016.

Increased fighting between the Government of Syria forces and non-state armed groups and terrorists had rendered the only access road in and out of eastern Aleppo impassable. Violence was escalating, and the parties continued to strive for military gains. Aleppo was being bombed daily and air strikes in the east and rocket and mortar attacks in the west had destroyed civilian structures, forcing people to flee.[35]

On 9 September 2016, the Russian Federation and the United States brokered a ceasefire agreement. With the reduction of violence in Syria holding, the United Nations used cessation of hostilities to deliver humanitarian assistance to needy people. Since ANF for the People of the Levant and other terrorist groups had used such pauses to consolidate their positions, simultaneous steps were needed by all parties involved in the conflict. Syrians needed to reach agreement on their future, but it was clear that they could not end the war on their own. Staffan de Mistura and the United Nations needed to wait for the major players, the United States and the Russian Federation, to make headway. The arrangement between the United States and the Russian Federation represented the best hope, but it was critical that opposition groups differentiated themselves from groups such as Da'esh and ANF.[36]

Tragically, the divisions inside Syria, amplified by regional divisions and mirrored in the Security Council, condemned Syria to its terrible fate. More and more, UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon insisted that Syria's destiny should not rest on what happened with a single individual, namely President Bashar al-Assad. The agreement reached on 9 September 2016 by the United States and Russia intended to relaunch the cessation of hostilities. But the cessation of hostilities unravelled almost immediately. On 17 September the United States, Australian and New Zealand airplanes attacked Syrian forces defending Deir-ez-Zor, besieged by Da'esh, followed by a land offensive by Da'esh to regain ground. The United States described the attack as a terrible mistake. On 18 September air strikes on Aleppo resumed, and on 19 September the Secretary-General reported attacks, attributed by some to Russia

[35] DPB, 11 July 2016; SC/12458, 7744th Meeting, 25 July 2016; SC/12482, 7757th Meeting (AM), 22 August 2016.

[36] DPB, 15 September 2016; SG/SM/18058, 14 September 2016; DPB, 15 July 2016; SC/12526, 7774th Meeting, 21 September 2016.

and Syria, against humanitarian convoys in Urum al-Kubra, west of Aleppo. President Bashar al-Assad pledged to liberate Syria from terrorists and started an offensive in eastern Aleppo on 23 September. The United States and the Russian Federation had been unable to coordinate efforts to ensure a ceasefire agreement and they traded accusations in the Security Council of misconduct in their handling of the crisis in Syria.[37]

In October 2016, Staffan de Mistura was seeking any solution that would help relieve the besieged population of eastern Aleppo. He suggested that an ANL be escorted out of Aleppo, and at a press conference in Geneva on 6 October 2016, he proposed to go to eastern Aleppo, to be a human shield for having the fighters of Al-Qaida or al-Nusrah fighters leave the city.[38] The Security Council was totally divided. The United States and Russia suspended their bilateral cooperation. France submitted a draft resolution aimed at a cessation of hostilities in Syria, in particular in eastern Aleppo. Russia did not accept unilateral grounding of airplanes, arguing that Al-Nusrah had moved to Aleppo and was keeping the civilian population hostage. On 8 October, two draft resolutions addressing the same issue confronted the Security Council. The Council failed to adopt the proposals, one from France and Spain, and the other from Russia, amid heated debate.[39]

Staffan de Mistura continued to push for a permanent cessation of hostilities in Aleppo. His proposal entailed a halt to bombing and fighting from both sides and the voluntary departure of Al-Nusra and other fighters, with their weapons, to another location. The Secretary-General warned there was no military solution to the Syrian crisis. Opportunities had been created for fighters to leave Aleppo, but most of them had

[37] SG/SM/18106-SC/12527-REF/1242, 21 September 2016; SC/12533, 7777th Meeting (AM), 25 September 2016.

[38] Press conference by UN Special Envoy for Syria, Mr. Staffan de Mistura and UN Senior Adviser, Mr. Jan Egeland, Geneva, 6 October 2016; DPB, 6 October 2016.

[39] Security Council Press conference, 3 October 2016; SC/12545, 7785th meeting (PM), 8 October 2016. The French and Spanish text, demanding an immediate halt to all aerial bombardments and military flights over the city of Aleppo, received 11 affirmative votes, two abstentions (Angola and China), and two negative votes (Russia and Venezuela). The Russian text, which urged an immediate cessation of hostilities, particularly in Aleppo, received a vote of 4 in favour (China, Egypt, Russia, and Venezuela) to 9 against (France, Japan, Malaysia, New Zealand, Senegal, Spain, Ukraine, United Kingdom, and United States), with 2 abstentions (Angola and Uruguay). Ibid.

decided not to leave. Syria argued that terrorists in eastern Aleppo were using citizens as human shields and were bombing western Aleppo. As it was Iraq's right to liberate Mosul from terrorism, it was Syria's to fight terrorism in Aleppo. The parallel battle for Mosul was leading to the displacement of civilians in Iraq. Da'esh tactics included taking civilians hostage and planting improvised explosive devices in civilian houses and residential neighbourhoods.[40]

The Security Council could not reach agreement on Aleppo. The Council failed to adopt a draft resolution that would have had all parties in Syria end attacks on Aleppo within 24 hours. Subsequently, on 9 December 2016, Canada asked for a formal meeting of the General Assembly to take up the Syrian situation.[41] The General Assembly adopted, by a recorded vote of 122 in favour to 13 against with 36 abstentions, a resolution demanding an immediate end to all hostilities in Syria. Several Member States welcomed the Canadian initiative to resolve the tragic humanitarian crisis in Syria. However, several countries abstained from voting because the situation in Syria was extremely complex, and the resolution was trying to impose a politicized narrative.[42]

In mid-December 2016, the international community had witnessed a complete taking back of eastern Aleppo by the Syrian forces from

[40]SG/SM/18218-GA/11845, 20 October 2016; DPB, 20 October 2016; SC/12564, 7795th Meeting (PM), 26 October 2016; DPB, 11 November 2016.

[41]SC/12605, 7822nd Meeting (AM), 30 November 2016; DPB, 1 December 2016; SC/12609, 7825th Meeting (PM), 5 December 2016. By 11 votes in favour of the draft resolution to 3 against (China, Russian Federation, and Venezuela), with 1 abstention (Angola), the Council rejected a text. Ibid.

[42]GA/11871, GA Plenary, 71st Session, 58th & 59th Meetings, 9 December 2016. Several Member States supported the text; however, they did not support preambular paragraphs 5 through 20 for their politicization of the conflict and crisis. A few paragraphs were seen as selective, including pointing at the Syrian Government as the sole party responsible for the crisis which was neither accurate nor appropriate. South Africa abstained from the vote, expressing concern that some Member States would use the text to affect a regime change at a time when the Syrian people looked to the United Nations to save them. Kazakhstan welcomed the Canadian initiative to resolve the tragic humanitarian crisis in Syria but abstained from voting because it was not only the official Syrian authorities who were responsible for the situation, as stated in the resolution. Ibid.

ANL. The United Nations had been invited to monitor and assist in the evacuation deal, facilitated by the Russian Federation and Turkey, from the remaining enclave in Aleppo that was controlled by armed opposition groups. Russia reported that 2215 militants laid down weapons and left eastern Aleppo. It also questioned estimates of 250,000 besieged civilians as overstated and emphasised that terrorists held over 100,000 civilians as human shields in eastern Aleppo.[43]

Evacuation of people from eastern Aleppo ended on 22 December 2016. More than 35,000 people had been evacuated, civilians as well as fighters and their families, to Idlib Governorate in Syria. In parallel, an estimated 1300 people had been evacuated from the besieged villages of Foah and Kefrayeh in Idlib. Most evacuees from Aleppo had gone to areas controlled by non-State armed groups, and humanitarian organizations had recorded the arrival of 23,615 people.[44]

The Secretary-General urged that Aleppo should represent the end of the quest for military victory, not the start of a broader military campaign in a country already ravaged by five years of war. The end of fighting in Aleppo had created a new opening and given a reason for hope. The Security Council restored its unity and unanimously adopted two resolutions opening a path to a political solution. On 21 December 2016, the Council unanimously adopted resolution 2332 (2016), noting the progress made during 2016 in taking back areas of Syria from the so-called ISIL/Da'esh, and ANF, but expressing its grave concern that areas remain under their control and about the devastating humanitarian impact on the civilian populations.[45]

On 31 December 2016, the Council unanimously adopted resolution 2336 (2016), submitted by Russia and Turkey, endorsing a package of documents laying out the terms of a country-wide ceasefire in Syria to start on 30 December 2016 and launching negotiations in mid-January 2017 in Astana, Kazakhstan, on a political settlement,

[43] DPB, 15 December 2016; SG/SM/18362-SC/12625, 13 December 2016; SC/12624, 7834th Meeting (PM), 13 December 2016.

[44] John Ging, Operations Director at the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), SC/12655, 7852nd Meeting (AM) 23 December 2016.

[45] SG/SM/18362-SC/12625, 13 December 2016; SC/12651, 7849th Meeting (AM), 21 December 2016.

to be followed by the negotiations under United Nations auspices in Geneva on 8 February 2017. Resolution 2336 (2016) represented a very good way to end 2016 putting Syria on a path to a lasting peace.[46]

As the overall situation in Syria continued to deteriorate, the crisis became a refugee emergency reaching to Europe. In August 2012, the number of refugees fleeing Syria rose sharply, with more than 100,000 people seeking asylum in surrounding countries. In December 2012, refugees were fleeing Syria at a rate of 3000 a day, in January 2013 that number had grown to 5000, and since February 2013, 8000 people were crossing Syria's borders every day. As Syria continued to sink deeper into violence, the crisis continued to have an impact on global, regional, and European security. But Europe also brought additional challenges to the United Nations and to Ban Ki-moon as they sought to deal with the legacy of an unresolved European post-Cold War security architecture in Georgia, Ukraine, and the Serbian province of Kosovo.[47]

[46]SC/12663, 7855th Meeting (PM), 31 December 2016. The package outlined agreements on a mechanism to record ceasefire violations, and on negotiations in mid-January in Astana, Kazakhstan, on a comprehensive political resolution of the Syrian crisis. The Council, stressing the importance of all relevant resolutions, looked forward to the meeting in Astana between the Syrian Government and opposition representatives, viewing it as an important part of the Syrian-led political process, and a "step ahead" of the resumption of negotiations under United Nations auspices in Geneva on 8 February 2017.

[47]DPB, 4 September 2012; SC/10981, Security Council 6949th Meeting (AM), 18 April 2013.

PART III

Challenges to the Post-Cold War Security Architecture

Check for updates

CHAPTER 11

Kosovo: Obviously a Delicate Matter

> In almost 40 years of my diplomatic life, I have never encountered an issue as divisive, as delicate and as intractable as the Kosovo issue. Legally, politically, morally, it is a landscape of enormous complexity and sensitivity that required the exercise of extraordinary objectivity and balance.
>
> UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon[1]

The United Nations administered Kosovo (also known as Kosovo and Metohija), in the province of Serbia, through the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) since 1999. The Security Council resolution 1244 (1999) established UNMIK after NATO air strikes, without a Security Council mandate, halted a crackdown on separatist ethnic Albanian forces by the troops of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia.[2] The Serbian province was governed by UNMIK and the local Provisional Institutions of Self-Government, with security provided by the NATO-led Kosovo Force (KFOR). In 2005–2006, Martti Ahtisaari, the former Finnish President and Special Envoy for the Kosovo status process, mediated talks between Belgrade and Priština.

[1] SG/SM/11649-SC/9367, 20 June 2008.

[2] SC/8940, Security Council 2006 Round-up, 12 January 2007. In 1999, NATO claimed it had intended to avert a human tragedy in Kosovo, Yugoslavia. Yugoslavia claimed it had suppressed the terrorist activities of the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA). During the Yugoslav crackdown on the KLA 10,000 people had been killed, during the NATO bombing of Yugoslavia 2500 people had been killed. SC/9623, 6097th Meeting (AM), 23 March 2009.

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M. Jesenský, *The United Nations under Ban Ki-moon*,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-12220-1_11

After more than seven years of international administration and local capacity-building, Kosovo's ethnic Albanian majority wanted separation from Serbia, but Belgrade insisted on a coexistence of Serbs and Albanians in a decentralized State.[3]

The pending decision on the final status of Kosovo, administered by the United Nations, was one of the most important issues for the Security Council in 2007. On 8 January 2007, Ban Ki-moon spoke to the Security Council for the first time as Secretary-General and pledged to work towards resolving the status of Kosovo. The question had extensive implications for reconciliation, peace and security in the Balkans, and respect for international law.[4]

Martti Ahtisaari presented his Kosovo status proposal to Belgrade and Priština in February 2007. The Comprehensive Proposal for the Kosovo Status Settlement promoted Kosovo's membership in international institutions combined with the establishment of an International Civilian Representative to supervise its implementation. The Proposal further laid out provisions for the protection of Kosovo's non-Albanian communities with the KFOR to provide a secure environment for as long as necessary. Ahtisaari maintained that a decision on Kosovo's status in the Security Council would not form a precedent and that de facto independence for Kosovo would not instigate separatist movements. He argued that the separatists did not need Kosovo for their ambitions.[5]

On 26 March 2007, the Secretary-General formally conveyed to the Council President the proposal prepared by Martti Ahtisaari, starting the process designed to lead to a determination of Kosovo's future status by the Security Council. Ahtisaari concluded, upon careful consideration of Kosovo's recent history and the realities of Kosovo, that the only viable option for Kosovo was independence, supervised for an initial period by the international community. Ban Ki-moon expressed his full support for Ahtisaari's settlement proposal.[6]

[3] SC/8940, Security Council 2006 Round-up, 12 January 2007.

[4] SC/8933, 5615th Meeting (AM), 8 January 2007; DPB, 8 January 2007; SC/9015, 5673rd Meeting (AM), 10 May 2007.

[5] Martti Ahtisaari, Press Conference on Kosovo Status Proposal, New York, 8 February 2007.

[6] DPB, 26 March 2007; SG/SM/10923, 26 March 2007.

Discussions among the Security Council members revealed how sensitive the issue was, as the Council addressed the dismemberment of a Member State. At the same time, many Members acknowledged that the point had been reached for taking a decision. The United States called for no return to the pre-1999 situation and supported the independence of Kosovo. The European Union was totally in favour of the Ahtisaari Plan. The Russian Federation opposed the Ahtisaari Plan and compared it with the Annan Plan on Cyprus.[7]

At the initiative of the Russian Federation, the Security Council delegation embarked on a six-day fact-finding mission to Belgrade and Kosovo to ensure that its members were fully informed on the situation. The Security Council mission noticed that Belgrade and all Kosovo Serb interlocutors remained firmly opposed to the Ahtisaari Plan. Instead, Belgrade was offering "substantial autonomy" of Kosovo within Serbia and under international supervision. Kosovo Albanian representatives, on the other hand, had expressed clear support for the Ahtisaari Plan. Kosovo Serb representatives, however, rejected independence. In general, Kosovo's society was still recovering from the 1998–1999 conflict and the violence in March 2004. The province's Albanian and Serb communities lived, to a large extent, separately from each other. The numbers of sustainable returns of internally displaced persons, the critical issue, continued to be very low. According to Belgrade authorities, only 2–5% of internally displaced persons had been able to return since 1999.[8]

In the subsequent Council debate, Johan C. Verbeke of Belgium, head of a Security Council mission to the Serbian province, observed that full and lasting reconciliation and a truly multi-ethnic society in Kosovo would require a sustainable commitment by all stakeholders. Authorities in Belgrade, as well as Kosovo Serbs, firmly rejected any form of independence for Kosovo, in particular the proposal presented by Special Envoy Martti Ahtisaari. They had asked for further negotiations. Kosovo Albanians, as well as non-Serb minority communities,

[7] Emyr Jones Parry (United Kingdom), Press Conference by Security Council President, 4 April 2007; SC/8940, Security Council 2006 Round-up, 12 January 2007; DPB, 20 April 2007.

[8] Johan C. Verbeke (Belgium), Press Conference on Security Council Fact-Finding Mission to Belgrade and Kosovo, 24 April 2007; SC/9013, 5672nd Meeting (PM), 2 May 2007.

had expressed strong support for the Ahtisaari Plan. The representative of Russia claimed that large-scale anti-Serbian violence in March 2004 undermined Kosovo Serbs' confidence in the Priština authorities. The Ahtisaari Plan would only provide a negative precedent for separatism with dangerous consequences for regional stability. The representative of France found regrettable that the positions of the two parties were irreconcilable, but that fact would not change with time. The representative of China pointed out that the Kosovo question was quite convoluted and had extensive implications for other issues. The representative of the United Kingdom observed that Kosovo was wholly surrounded by the European Union and its future was very much on offer. The representative of the United States saw no potential for the passage of time to change the polarization in the foreseeable future and UNMIK and KFOR could not remain in place indefinitely. The province had been part of a country that no longer existed, the Ahtisaari Plan was the best option for ending the final chapter of the former Yugoslavia.[9]

The Secretary-General was deeply concerned about the lack of progress on the final status proposal and warned that progress on Kosovo would unravel if there were not prompt action. Ban Ki-moon urged the international community to find a solution that was timely, addressed the key concerns of all communities and provided clarity for Kosovo's status. The Secretary-General tried to make it clear that the issue of Kosovo was a *sui generis* issue and that its resolution would not create any precedent: "It is clear—and it has been clearly stated on many occasions—that this resolution, the question of Kosovo, will not create any precedents for other matters."[10]

At the end of 2007, the international community intensified its diplomatic activity, as the situation in Kosovo was very serious. There were rumours that Kosovo would soon proclaim its independence. On 17 November, Kosovo's Central Election Commission organized elections, in a shortened time frame and under UNMIK's authority. Next, on 26–28 November, the European Union, the Russian Federation and the United States, held a final round of talks between Belgrade and Priština on the status of Kosovo, but substantial differences remained.[11]

[9] SC/9015, 5673rd Meeting (AM), 10 May 2007.

[10] SG/SM/11091, 16 July 2007; SG/SM/11111, 1 August 2007.

[11] SC/9227, 5821st Meeting (PM), 16 January 2008; SG/SM/11386, 23 January 2008.

On 16 January 2008, Serbian President Boris Tadić made the last appeal to the Security Council to prevent a unilateral declaration of independence (UDI) by Kosovo. Belgrade was ready to grant its southern province, Kosovo and Metohija, the "largest possible autonomy." Serbia measured its proposal of autonomy against the manner in which China had resolved the question of Hong Kong and Macao, and Finland had addressed the status of the Aaland Islands. Belgrade dismissed argument that Slobodan Milošević and his regime were the parties responsible for the situation in Kosovo, and consequently, because of their mistakes, Kosovo deserved independence. The Security Council's members knew that resolution 1244 guaranteed Serbia's territorial sovereignty. There were no results concerning the security of the Serbian population in Kosovo, eight years after the arrival of UNMIK, 207,000 persons remained internally displaced in Serbia.[12]

On 17 February 2008, the Assembly of Kosovo's Provisional Institutions of Self-Government declared Kosovo's independence, while its 10 Kosovo Serb deputies did not attend the session. Interestingly, at the same time, Kosovo Prime Minister Hashim Thaci reaffirmed Kosovo's commitment to the Ahtisaari Plan and continued adherence to resolution 1244, which guaranteed Serbia's territorial sovereignty. Serbia announced that the declaration of independence represented a unilateral secession and did not produce any legal effect. UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon stated that, pending new guidance from the Security Council, UNMIK would continue to consider Security Council resolution 1244 (1999) as the legal framework for its mandate.[13]

The Security Council was sharply divided in its approach to the Serbian province, administered by the United Nations. The Council met on 18 February 2008 at an emergency meeting to consider Kosovo's UDI from Serbia. Ban Ki-moon stated that developments were likely to have significant operational implications, but pending Council guidance, UNMIK would continue to consider resolution 1244 (1999) as its legal framework and would continue to implement its mandate.[14]

Boris Tadić, President of Serbia, declared that the illegal declaration of independence by the Kosovo Albanians constituted a flagrant violation of resolution 1244 (1999), guaranteeing the sovereignty and

[12]SC/9227, 5821st Meeting (PM), 16 January 2008.

[13]SG/SM/11424, 17 February 2008.

[14]SC/9252, 5839th Meeting (PM), 18 February 2008.

territorial integrity of Serbia. Some countries proposed that Slobodan Milošević was the culprit for the situation, but Milošević was there no more, and Albanians had demanded independence for decades before his era. The Secretary-General should instruct Martti Ahtisaari to declare the unilateral secession null and void. The Russian Federation also demanded to declare the declaration null and void in accordance with Ahtisaari's mandate under resolution 1244 (1999). The United Kingdom and United States had recognized Kosovo. The United Kingdom insisted that the legacy of Milošević had made Kosovo's return under Belgrade's control impossible. The international community could not be party to a settlement that was opposed by over 90% of a territory's population. The US representative understood the concern that Kosovo's independence would set a precedent, but Kosovo was clearly a special case and the declaration of independence was fully consistent with resolution 1244 (1999). The United States would not accept Kosovo's example for any other dispute. China's representative warned that unilateral action by Kosovo could rekindle conflicts adversely impacting the entire region and beyond. China objected to impose solution by pressure. France and Belgium, who recognized Kosovo as an independent State, underlined that the future of Serbia and the Balkans existed within the European Union. Realities on the ground could not be ignored. Viet Nam stressed that resolution 1244 (1999), while providing for a future status of Kosovo to be negotiated and agreed upon by the parties concerned, did reaffirm the commitments of UN Member States for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, whose successor was Serbia and other States in the region. South Africa regretted that a decision had not been taken in conformity with a legal and political process envisaged by resolution 1244 (1999). The Secretary-General, in his concluding remarks, noted that the situation on the ground and in the Security Council was very different from the earlier period of UNMIK. He had taken note of the European Union's decision to deploy a rule of law mission and a European Union Special Representative to Kosovo.[15]

Following the UDI, some Member States had recognized Kosovo as a sovereign and independent State, while others had not. The divisions in the international community added to the complexity of the issue. Mindful of the differences, the United Nations had taken a position of strict neutrality.

[15] SC/9252, 5839th Meeting (PM), 18 February 2008.

After all, the independence of a country was recognized by other countries; the recognition or non-recognition, was a bilateral thing. It was a matter for Member States to have a position on that, each one individually. The United Nations itself, the Secretariat, did not recognize States.[16]

On 3 April 2008, the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) acquitted Ramush Haradinaj, a leader of the KLA and former Prime Minister of the Kosovo Provisional Institutions of Self-Government, of all charges of war crimes and crimes against humanity against him for alleged violations committed in Kosovo between March and September 1998. Haradinaj faced charges of participating in criminal activities consolidating the KLA's control in Kosovo by the mistreatment and murder of Serbs, Romas and Albanians perceived as disloyal. In May 2008, the book by Carla Del Ponte, former ICTY Prosecutor, revealed the shocking information about human trafficking in Kosovo. The international community was appalled by the allegations, according to which, Serbs and other non-Albanians of Kosovo had been abducted and transferred by the KLA to Albania, where they had been tortured and had their vital organs removed for sale.[17]

On 15 June 2008, the constitution promulgated by the Kosovo authorities came into effect. The document envisaged no role for UNMIK and the new authorities assumed the powers residing with the Special Representative of the Secretary-General. The Kosovo Serb community overwhelmingly rejected the new constitution, as they continued to recognize any new laws originating from Priština.[18]

On 20 June 2008, reacting to developments on the ground, the Secretary-General proposed to reconfigure UNMIK. Ban Ki-moon portrayed the issue of Kosovo as one of the most divisive, delicate and intractable situations he had encountered in his 40-year diplomatic career. The reconfiguration plan included an enhanced operational role for the European Union in rule of law. Reconfigured UNMIK, the "least objectionable way forward," would continue to carry out many functions, including those related to police, courts, customs, transport and infrastructure, boundaries, and Serbian patrimony.[19]

[16]DPB, 4 March 2008; SC/9366, 5917th Meeting (AM), 20 June 2008; SG/SM/11649-SC/9367, 20 June 2008.

[17]DPB, 3 April 2008; DPB, 6 May 2008; SC/9347, 5904th Meeting (AM), 4 June 2008.

[18]SC/9366, 5917th Meeting (AM), 20 June 2008.

[19]DPB, 12 June 2008; DPB, 20 June 2008; SC/9683, 6144th Meeting (PM), 17 June 2009.

Some members of the Security Council, including the United Kingdom, France and Italy supported the proposed changes, but others, notably the Russian Federation, objected to the UNMIK reconfiguration and the enhanced EU role in Kosovo. Russia viewed it unlawful to have a European Union Rule of Law mission (EULEX), as any attempts to reconfigure UNMIK and bypass the Council were wrong. The United States appreciated the Secretary-General's proposal, the United Nations could no longer play a major role in Kosovo. Representative of Kosovo noted that over two-thirds of the European Union and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization had recognized Kosovo's status. The President of Serbia observed the Secretary-General's report gave the impression of acquiescing to an unjustifiable violation of resolution 1244 (1999). The report was an acknowledgement that an influential and determined minority could set aside international law, in the name of appeasing an ethnic group.[20]

The Security Council remained deadlocked and unable to endorse the Secretary-General's proposal. Ban Ki-moon decided to reconfigure UNMIK in light of new realities. UNMIK formally announced the start of a reconfiguration process on 26 June 2008. The United States welcomed the Secretary-General's decision, UNMIK had to adapt to the new reality of Kosovo's independence. Russia claimed the Secretary-General had exceeded his authority and intruded on the Council's prerogative in deciding to reconfigure UNMIK. He seemed to legalize a structure implementing the Ahtisaari Plan, the move not approved by the Council. Serbia noted the Secretary-General proceeded without the Security Council's consent and in direct opposition to Serbia, the host country of UNMIK.[21]

By summer 2008, the situation in Kosovo has changed fundamentally. The Kosovo Albanian majority continued to assume control over areas previously reserved to the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Kosovo and Head of UNMIK. The Kosovo Assembly passed laws, promulgated by the President of Kosovo, without reference either to the Special Representative's powers under resolution 1244 (1999) or the Constitutional Framework. The Kosovo Serbs rejected the Constitution and related legislation. They reacted by expanding

[20] SC/9366, 5917th Meeting (AM), 20 June 2008.

[21] SC/9407, 5944th Meeting (AM), 25 July 2008; SC/9512, 6025th Meeting (PM), 26 November 2008.

boycott of the territory's institutions and by creating new parallel municipal authorities in all Serb-majority municipalities. The Serbian Electoral Commission organized elections in municipalities inhabited by Kosovo Serbs. UNMIK declared their results invalid.[22]

In the summer of 2008, Serbia decided to seek an advisory opinion from the International Court of Justice (ICJ) regarding Kosovo's UDI. On 8 October 2008, the General Assembly asked the ICJ to issue an advisory opinion on the "unilateral declaration of independence by the Provisional Institutions of Self-Government," by the recorded vote 77 in favour to 6 against (Albania, Marshall Islands, Micronesia, Nauru, Palau, United States) with 74 abstentions. Serbia expected the ICJ to state that the UDI was not in line with international law. A ruling by the ICJ could serve as a catalyst towards gathering political will for a compromise solution. Otherwise, Serbia warned, a unilateral declaration would serve as a precedent throughout the world.[23]

Although the Security Council resolution 1244 (1999) remained in force and still provided UNMIK's mandate, actions of the institutions of Kosovo had made it no longer possible for the Mission to administer the Serbian province. Basic consent by Kosovo's authorities to direct administration by UNMIK disappeared. On 18 November 2008, Kosovo rejected in its entirety the proposal of the Secretary-General as infringement upon its sovereignty and territorial integrity.[24]

One year after the UDI, fifty-six United Nations Member States, including nine Security Council members, had recognized Kosovo's independence. There were worrying reports on the inter-ethnic violence and voluntary minority returns had dropped sharply compared to 2006 and 2007. UNMIK's presence had been substantially reduced and replaced by the EULEX in Kosovo. While the Kosovo authorities maintained working contacts with Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the UNMIK, the Mission faced ever-increasing challenges to its mandate. Kosovo and its authorities continued to act on the basis of laws passed by the Assembly of Kosovo with no reference to the powers of

[22] SC/9407, 5944th Meeting (AM), 25 July 2008.

[23] Press conference by Serbian Foreign Minister Vuk Jeremić, 5 August 2008; Press conference by Serbian Foreign Minister Vuk Jeremić, 8 October 2008.

[24] SC/9512, 6025th Meeting (PM), 26 November 2008.

the Special Representative. In line with Belgrade's official policy, Kosovo Serbs continued to reject the authority of Kosovo's institutions. In the north, four municipal structures in Kosovo Serb-majority areas functioned on the basis of Serbia's law on local self-governance. Serbia supported new negotiations on Kosovo's future status and opposed its independence.[25]

In 2009, the Kosovo authorities continued to make a series of public statements requesting UNMIK to conclude its mission, asserting that Security Council resolution 1244 (1999) was no longer relevant. They claimed that clear testimony to the progress, stability and its recognition was Kosovo's admission to the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank. The United States supported the reconfiguration and downsizing of UNMIK and Kosovo's full participation in the Euro-Atlantic community and in regional organizations. Twenty-two European Union members recognized Kosovo, the remaining four European Union members declined it, claiming consistent position on the question of recognition of independent States and the respect of international law.[26]

UNMIK continued to function as an almost exclusive link with Priština for the three Kosovo Serb-majority municipalities in the north. Since EULEX was perceived as supporting the interest of the Priština authorities, UNMIK's main function was to engage with all communities. Ban Ki-moon called on Serbia and Kosovo to find ways to put aside considerations of status in the interest of pursuing regional cooperation. The Kosovo authorities, which had previously maintained very limited contacts with the Head of UNMIK, started to improve their relations with UNMIK.[27]

On 22 July 2010 the ICJ delivered its advisory opinion on Kosovo's UDI. The Court concluded that the adoption of the UDI by the Provisional Institutions of Self-Government of Kosovo did not violate any applicable rule of international law. The ICJ had also reaffirmed that Kosovo remained subject to the interim administration of

[25] SC/9623, 6097th Meeting (AM), 23 March 2009.

[26] SC/9683, 6144th Meeting (PM), 17 June 2009; Press Conference by Spain's Prime Minister Jose Luis Rodriguez Zapatero, 23 September 2009.

[27] SC/9768, 6202nd Meeting (PM), 15 October 2009; SC/9851, 6264th Meeting (PM), 22 January 2010.

the United Nations and that resolution 1244 (1999) and UNMIK's Constitutional Framework for Provisional Self-Government in Kosovo remained in force and continued to apply. Following its delivery, the Secretary-General forwarded the opinion to the General Assembly, which requested the Court's advice. Serbia regretted the Court had narrowly examined the language of the declaration leaving room for a view as having legalized unilateral secession. Kosovo welcomed the Court's advisory opinion and called on States that had delayed recognizing Kosovo to move forward with recognition.[28]

In September 2010, the General Assembly welcomed the readiness of the European Union to facilitate a process of dialogue between Belgrade and Priština. In December 2010, the Kosovo authorities had organized the first Assembly elections not held within the framework of resolution 1244 (1999) and in which UNMIK had played no role. Local and international observers reported widespread irregularities and vote manipulation.[29]

In January 2011, the Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly considered the report titled *Inhuman Treatment of People and Illicit Trafficking in Human Organs in Kosovo*, the so-called Marty Report, claiming that the KLA leadership was responsible for kidnapping hundreds of Kosovo Serb civilians before, during and after the 1999 conflict. According to the report, the abductees had been sent by the KLA Drenica Group to secret detention camps in Albania, where their organs were extracted during forced surgeries before they were murdered. The report identified Hashim Thaci, Kosovo's sitting prime minister, as the Group leader and listed a number of other prominent personalities as co-conspirators in various criminal activities. In addition to these allegations, EUROPOL identified Kosovo as a major European hub of organized crime. Ethnic Albanian groups remained the most prominent in the trafficking of heroin into and within the European Union. The government of Kosovo rejected the Council of Europe's report allegations. The Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly called for an investigation of

[28]SG/SM/13023-ICJ/623, 22 July 2010; SC/10000, 6367th Meeting (PM), 3 August 2010. The ICJ delivered its advisory opinion on the question "Is the unilateral declaration of independence by the Provisional Institutions of Self-Government of Kosovo in accordance with international law?" See SG/SM/13023-ICJ/623, 22 July 2010.

[29]SG/SM/13093-GA/10981, 13 September 2010; SC/10177, 6483rd Meeting (PM), 16 February 2011.

these allegations. Serbia requested the Security Council to establish an independent mechanism to investigate organ crimes.[30]

While the dialogue between Priština and Belgrade, facilitated by the European Union, continued, the situation in Kosovo remained precarious and warranted the Security Council's attention. Some observers qualified Kosovo as a frozen conflict, some qualified the situation as fluid and dynamic. The situation in northern Kosovo overshadowed all other political developments. Tensions had persisted in northern Kosovo over a plan to hand over authority on boundary crossing points, managed by the EULEX, to Kosovo authorities. In July 2011, Kosovo authorities tried, for the first time, to install their customs officials on crossing points between northern Kosovo, dominated by ethnic Serbs, and Serbia proper. Local Kosovo Serbs opposed deployment of the police units and an officer was killed during a gunfight. On 23–24 November, KFOR troops attempted to dismantle an unmanned barricade at Dudin Krš on the Mitrovica bypass, but local Kosovo Serb residents attacked them. Finally, on 28 November 2011, KFOR removed a roadblock from a village west of Zubin Potok, using water cannons, teargas and rubber bullets. Kosovo Serb demonstrators threw Molotov cocktails at KFOR troops, resulting in injuries to soldiers and demonstrators.[31]

In 2012, Kosovo's independence was a political reality, close to half of all United Nations Member States recognized the State of Kosovo. Tensions flaring in 2011 over crossing points and other issues in the ethnic Serb-dominated north of Kosovo had subsided, although the situation remained volatile. Kosovo and Serbia had been taking part in the European Union-facilitated dialogue since March 2011. UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon welcomed the resumption of the European Union-facilitated dialogue between Belgrade and Pristina. Serbia continued to insist on an

[30]SC/10177, 6483rd Meeting (PM), 16 February 2011; SC/10250, 6534th Meeting (PM), 12 May 2011; SC/10269, 6545th Meeting (AM), 6 June 2011. For the Marty Report, see AS/Jur (2010) 46 [provisional version], 12 December 2010, Committee on Legal Affairs and Human Rights, Inhuman treatment of people and illicit trafficking in human organs in Kosovo, accessed 19 June 2018, http://www.assembly.coe.int/CommitteeDocs/2010/ajdoc462010prov.pdf.

[31]SC/10371, 6604th Meeting (AM), 30 August 2011; SC/10386, 6616th Meeting (Night), 15 September 2011; SC/10462, 6670th Meeting (AM), 29 November 2011.

effective investigation into allegations that the KLA had killed people for the purpose of organ trafficking.[32]

On 2 July 2012, the International Steering Group decided to end the supervision of Kosovo's independence and accordingly close the International Civilian Office (ICO) in Kosovo, ending supervised independence. Kosovo authorities claimed that their territory was among the most successful examples of peacebuilding and state-building in the last few decades. There was fair representation of all ethnicities in the 120-seat parliament, and three Kosovo Serbs served as ministers, including a Deputy Prime Minister. UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon visited Belgrade and Priština in July 2012. On 23–24 July 2012, Ban Ki-moon arrived in Belgrade to hold talks with President Tomislav Nikolić, and then with then-Foreign Minister Vuk Jeremić, the President-elect of the UN General Assembly. On 24 July, Ban Ki-moon arrived in Priština to meet with the United Nations Mission in Kosovo and the UN Kosovo team. At the airport, he also met with representatives of the Kosovo Authorities. Kosovo entered a new phase with the ICO ending its mandate. The United Nations authorities noted the high financial cost of maintaining the international presence in Kosovo, about half a billion dollars annually, asking whether those expenditures were contributing in a coordinated fashion towards a solution.[33]

In 2013, the European Union-sponsored political dialogue between Kosovo and Serbia aimed at normalizing relations and integrating the Serb population in northern Kosovo, where the continuing lack of consensus concerning municipal authority in northern Mitrovica had continued to cause volatility in the mixed communities. During the wave of vandalism and destruction across Kosovo between 13 and 22 January, some 200 gravestones in several Serbian Orthodox cemeteries had been damaged or destroyed, as well, a monument dedicated to Kosovo Serbs and Kosovo Albanians killed during World War II had been bulldozed in broad daylight before a cheering crowd. Understandably, the Serb

[32]SC/10539, 6713th Meeting (AM), 8 February 2012; SC/10646, 6769th Meeting (PM), 14 May 2012; SG/SM/13999, 6 December 2011; SC/10476, 6678th Meeting (PM), 7 December 2011,

[33]SC/10539, 6713th Meeting (AM), 8 February 2012; SC/10646, 6769th Meeting (PM), 14 May 2012; SC/10746, 6822nd Meeting (AM), 21 August 2012; SG/SM/13999, 6 December 2011; SC/10476, 6678th Meeting (PM), 7 December 2011; SG/T/2861, 2 August 2012; SG/T/2862, 2 August 2012.

community and Serbian Orthodox Church in Kosovo remained deeply concerned by the expressions of hatred and intolerance. In February 2013, Serbian President Tomislav Nikolić and Atifete Jahjaga of Kosovo met in Brussels marking a historic new chapter in the effort to overcome the legacy of past conflict.[34]

2013 was a historic year with the significant political breakthroughs achieved. The European Union welcomed Croatia as its twenty-eighth Member State. On 19 April, Belgrade and Priština signed, a historic "First Agreement on Principles Governing the Normalization of Relations." During the process, Serbia had granted limited legal and international legitimacy to Kosovo's provisional institutions of self-government. The Brussels Agreement provided for a Community of Serb-majority Municipalities to be established in Kosovo. On 28 June, the European Council had decided to start accession negotiations with Serbia, as well as talks with Kosovo on a stabilization and association agreement. Normalization of relations between Kosovo and Serbia was crucial for stability and reconciliation in the region. Kosovo's authorities asked the Security Council to consider removing Kosovo from its agenda. The United States also urged the Council to reduce the number of reports and meetings dedicated to Kosovo. Despite the overall success of Kosovo-wide municipal elections on 3 November, the establishment of new administrations in its northern municipalities had been slow. In addition, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), informed that 210,148 Kosovo Serbs remained internally displaced and living in Serbia.[35]

In 2014, Belgrade and Priština made great strides towards normalization of relations. On 8 June, general elections in Kosovo were conducted for the first time under a unified legal framework and Belgrade encouraged Kosovo Serb voters to participate. Making progress on the formation of the Association/Community of Serb-majority municipalities was

[34] SC/10954, 6939th Meeting (AM), 22 March 2013.

[35] SC/11270, 7108th Meeting (PM), 10 February 2014; SG/SM/14958, 19 April 2013; SC/11033, Security Council 6979th Meeting (AM), 14 June 2013; SC/11107, 7026th Meeting (AM), 29 August 2013; SC/11181, 7064th Meeting (PM), 19 November 2013. The European Commission refers to the designation "Kosovo" without prejudice to positions on status, and in line with UNSCR 1244/1999 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence. See the EC website, https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/countries/detailed-country-information/kosovo_en.

critical to promoting further normalization. However, little progress had been made with the return and reintegration of internally displaced persons, with fewer internally displaced persons returning to Kosovo, as compared to 2013. Following the Marty Report on crimes committed by members of the KLA, the Chief Prosecutor of the European Union Special Investigative Task Force had found compelling evidence to file an indictment against senior officials of the KLA responsible for the persecution of Serbs, Roma and of Kosovo Albanians. Given the gravity of the alleged crimes, Kosovo was expected to institute a judicial process.[36]

In August 2015, Farid Zarif, departing head of the UNMIK, urged Priština and Belgrade to build on the historic momentum towards a negotiated political settlement. Zarif argued that the situation has dramatically changed since 2011, when tension was at an extreme high on the ground and public political discourse was adversarial. In 2015, Kosovo Serb mayors, elected for the first time under a unified legal framework, governed in all 10 Kosovo Serb-majority municipalities, and Kosovo Serbs served in the central institutions at the ministerial level and as parliamentarians. At the same time, the establishment of the Association/Community of Serb-majority municipalities, a core provision of the April 2013 agreement between the Prime Ministers of Serbia and Kosovo, remained unresolved. The number of displaced persons returning to Kosovo was the lowest since 2000. On the other hand, the Kosovo Parliament had voted to amend the Constitution to create a special court for war crimes committed by the KLA.[37]

Kosovo, a non-Member State of the United Nations, had applied for membership at the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). There was a debate whether Kosovo was eligible to become a UNESCO member before becoming a United Nations Member State. Essentially, Kosovo needed a two-thirds vote of the General Conference to become a member and Serbia was doing everything to prevent it. The Serbian authorities argued that the support expressed by the United States for Kosovo's membership in UNESCO contradicted the opposition to Palestine's

[36]SC/11545, 7257th Meeting (PM), 29 August 2014; SC/11684, 7327th Meeting (PM), 4 December 2014.

[37]SC/11906, 7448th Meeting (AM), 26 May 2015; SC/12020, 7510th Meeting (AM), 21 August 2015.

membership to that agency on the basis that Palestine was not a recognized State.[38]

In the fall of 2015, Belgrade and Priština made breakthroughs on the Association/Community of Serb-majority Municipalities. Subsequently, on 27 October 2015, Kosovo signed the Stabilization and Association Agreement with the European Union, demonstrating its commitment to the European path. However, after UNESCO had turned down Kosovo's request for membership, the Constitutional Court of Kosovo suspended the agreement on the establishment of the Community of Serb-majority municipalities.[39]

In 2016, there had been some consolidation of the political situation. The Netherlands agreed to host the court in The Hague to investigate cases of war crimes committed by the KLA. At the same time, it appeared that the situation in Kosovo had continued to be unstable. The threat of security and political tensions remained beneath the surface. The authorities implemented a strong law enforcement approach regarding the presence of radical Islamist elements and organizers in Kosovo, as Kosovar Albanians accounted for the largest percentage of those fighting in the ranks of Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Da'esh). The pace of normalization between Belgrade and Priština had slowed down. There had been few visible signs of progress towards implementation of the Association of Serb Majority municipalities. The Brussels dialogue facilitated by the European Union had not borne any fruit. Serbia called on all countries that had not recognized the UDI of Kosovo to persevere in showing respect for international law, the United Nations Charter and Council resolution 1244 (1999), despite the outside pressures.[40]

The UNMIK remained unique. While the Mission no longer administered Kosovo, it was important for providing support and legitimacy in its role as a bridge between the Security Council and the people of Kosovo. The presence of UNMIK and other international missions remained important. The United States insisted it was important to recognize that UNMIK's mandate had largely been accomplished, the only reason the Council was meeting so frequently on the issue was political,

[38] DPB, 17 Aug 2015; SC/12020, 7510th Meeting (AM), 21 August 2015.

[39] SC/12129, 7563rd Meeting (PM), 19 November 2015.

[40] SC/12265, 7637th Meeting (PM), 29 February 2016; SC/12489, 7760th Meeting (AM), 25 August 2016; SC/12588, 7811th Meeting (PM), 16 November 2016.

and it was time to reduce both the time and money spent on the Mission. Some Member States emphasized that resolution 1244 (1999) was in full force as the internationally accepted legal basis for settling the situation in Kosovo, including respect for sovereignty. Serbia argued Kosovo might be an independent country in European eyes, but that was not the case in the United Nations.[41]

Resolution 1244 (1999) provided for a future status of Kosovo to be negotiated and agreed upon by the parties concerned. It also reaffirmed the commitments of Member States for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, whose successor was Serbia and other States in the region. Regrettably, despite the commitment of the two parties, the Council and the international community, a negotiated solution could not be found.

Kosovo's unilateral secession in 2008 and the subsequent fallout from its recognition by some Member States eroded Security Council resolution 1244 (1999). It was not ideal for Kosovo to become independent without the consent of Serbia and without consensus of the Council. The UDI by Kosovo was not in conformity with resolution 1244 (1999). It added to tension in Kosovo and the Balkans and deepened divisions in Europe. Following Kosovo's UDI, the leadership of Bosnia and Herzegovina's Republika Srpska entity had officially linked its future status with that of the breakaway Serbian province.

Ban Ki-moon observed that, in his almost 40 years of diplomatic life, he has never encountered an issue as divisive, as delicate and as intractable as the Kosovo issue. He reconfigured and restructured the United Nations UNMIK to continue and to allow the European Union to take on some increasing operational responsibilities in Kosovo. UNMIK's mandate had been overtaken by the realities on the ground. The United Nations itself did not recognize States. It was a matter for Member States to have a position on that, each one individually.

The Secretary-General argued that the issue of Kosovo was a *sui generis* issue, and it would not create any other precedents to other potential such problems. The events in Georgia in 2008–2009 tested this assumption. Just as Serbian authorities were very much against granting independence to Kosovo, authorities in Georgia proved very much against granting independence to Abkhazia or to South Ossetia.

[41]SC/12265, 7637th Meeting (PM), 29 February 2016; SC/12365, 7693rd Meeting (AM), 16 May 2016; SC/12129, 7563rd Meeting (PM), 19 November 2015.

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CHAPTER 12

Georgia: A New Dividing Line

> Finally, a number of external developments, including those related to Kosovo, contributed to a general climate of polarization in which joint international action to contain local conflicts became more and more difficult.
>
> UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon[1]

The United Nations Observer Mission in Georgia (UNOMIG) was established in 1993. Following the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991, Abkhazia, a former autonomous republic within Georgia, declared its independence. The Government of Georgia responded to the secession by deploying its troops in Abkhazia. In May 1994, the Georgian and Abkhaz sides signed the Agreement on a Ceasefire and Separation of Forces in Moscow, consenting to the deployment of a peacekeeping force of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), with UNOMIG observers monitoring its implementation. Subsequently, UNOMIG facilitated the UN-chaired dialogue between the Georgian and Abkhaz sides in Geneva.[2]

In January 2007, United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon observed that the focus of the Georgian and Abkhaz sides had shifted towards enlisting external support, rather than pursuing their political

[1] Report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Abkhazia, Georgia, S/2008/631, 3 October 2008, p. 11.

[2] SC/8940, 12 January 2007; DPB, 13 February 2007.

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M. Jesenský, *The United Nations under Ban Ki-moon*,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-12220-1_12

objectives through mutual accommodation. Both sides acknowledged the deteriorating situation along the ceasefire line and expressed their readiness to redress it.[3]

In February 2007, Martti Ahtisaari unveiled his plan for independence of Kosovo, the province of Serbia. There were concerns that Kosovo would set a very bad precedent and would encourage Abkhazia, South Ossetia, Nagorny-Karabakh and Transdniestria. Authorities in Georgia, Azerbaijan and Moldova were very much against granting independence to these secessionist entities, as Serbian authorities were very much against granting independence to Kosovo. The Secretary-General maintained that the issue of Kosovo was a *sui generis* issue and it would not create any other precedents to other potential such problems. The United Nations and the international community's involvement made the issue different and, Kosovo would not create any precedents for other matters.[4]

The situation on the ground was continuously deteriorating and Georgia repeatedly hinted at the eventual end of the international peacekeeping in Abkhazia. In August 2007, Georgia accused Russia of violating its airspace, claiming the incident was intended to send a warning message to former Soviet republics and signal strong support for separatists. Russia presented the incident as a deliberate provocation, aggravating tensions over its mediation and peacekeeping role in Abkhazia and Ossetia. On 20 September 2007, the most serious clash in many years between the Georgian and Abkhaz sides left two Abkhaz dead, several wounded and a number taken prisoner. The deadly clash took place outside the area of responsibility of UNOMIG and the CIS peacekeeping force.[5]

Kosovo's unilateral declaration of independence on 17 February 2008 further exacerbated the increasingly volatile international and local context of the Georgian-Abkhaz conflict. Therefore, a new reality was being established, with profound consequences for international relations.

[3] DPB, 15 January 2007; SC/8997, 5661st Meeting (AM), 13 April 2007.

[4] SG/SM/11091, 16 July 2007.

[5] Press Conference by Russian Federation, 21 August 2007; Press Conference by Georgia, 22 August 2007; SG/SM/11172, 21 September 2007; SC/9142, 5759th Meeting (AM), 15 October 2007; GA/SPD/383, Fourth Committee, 14th Meeting (AM), 1 November 2007.

Georgia, Moldova and Azerbaijan worried about their secessionist regions, viewed as the manifestation of aggressive separatism and a serious threat to political and economic stability.[6]

On 16 April 2008, President Vladimir Putin of the Russian Federation issued an executive order to establish direct legal, trade, economic, social, scientific, technical, education and cultural ties with Abkhazia and South Ossetia. Georgia criticized the decision as legalizing the *de facto* separatist regimes and contradicting the universally recognized norms and principles of international law, including the United Nations Charter and Council resolution 876 (1993).[7]

The General Assembly of the United Nations addressed the situation in Abkhazia within the context of conflicts in the so-called GUAM area (Georgia, Ukraine, Azerbaijan, Moldova). On 15 May 2008, in a recorded vote of 14 Member States in favour to 11 against and 105 abstaining, the Assembly recognized the right of all refugees and internally displaced persons to return to Abkhazia, Georgia. Ukraine warned the conflicts in the GUAM region had to be settled through unconditional recognition of the principles of territorial integrity. It was dangerous to assume that the tensions around Abkhazia were a result of developments in Kosovo. Georgia maintained that the conflict in Abkhazia was an outstanding example of externally generated conflict, maintained in a frozen state to subdue and control the region. During the vote, several countries abstained because the subject matter was under consideration by the Security Council. Article 12 of the United Nations Charter stipulated that the General Assembly would not make recommendations while the Security Council was considering a situation.[8]

In July 2008, there was a sharp increase in tension in the Georgian-Abkhaz conflict. The bombings on Abkhaz-controlled territory had left 4 dead and one of those killed was a staff member of the UNOMIG. On 7 August 2008, the Secretary-General expressed serious concern about

[6] GA/10628, Plenary, 16th Meeting (AM), 3 October 2007; GA/DIS/3344, First Committee, 6th Meeting (PM), 15 October 2007; Press Conference by Georgia, 21 April 2008.

[7] SG/SM/11327, 12 December 2007; Press Conference by Georgia, 21 April 2008.

[8] DPB, 15 May 2008; GA/10708, 97th Meeting (AM), 15 May 2008.

the mounting violence in South Ossetia. As the violence further escalated, the Security Council had to address the mounting crisis in South Ossetia twice in a single day.[9]

On 8 August 2008, at 1:15 a.m., the Security Council convened an emergency meeting, at the request of Russia. Georgia and Russia presented conflicting views on the worsening crisis. Russia informed the Council that in the night Georgian military had begun an attack against Tskhinvali, South Ossetia's capital, and the Security Council had to call for an end to hostilities. Georgia explained its military action in South Ossetia had been taken in self-defence, but now additional forces were entering Georgia from Russia through the Roki Tunnel. Georgia called on the international community to condemn Russia. The Security Council members appealed to the parties involved, Russia and Georgia, to immediately cease hostilities on the ground and resume dialogue.[10]

On the same day, at 4:15 p.m., the Security Council discussed the situation in South Ossetia for the second time. Again, Russia and Georgia presented conflicting views on the situation. Georgia claimed it was facing a full-scale military invasion by Russia, aimed at subduing and compelling it to give up its Euro-Atlantic aspirations. Russia stated the Georgian action was in violation of the agreements for settlement of the Georgian-Ossetian conflict signed or agreed in the 1990s by Georgia, South Ossetia, Russia and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). Many of the Council members saw the situation as a threat to peace and security in the region and beyond and called for an immediate ceasefire.[11]

The conflict in Georgia was expanding in intensity and geographical scope. The escalation of hostilities resulted in large numbers of casualties and massive destruction in South Ossetia and other regions of Georgia. In the Abkhaz zone of conflict, the Abkhaz *de facto* authorities announced a military operation in the Upper Kodori Valley. The Secretary-General was profoundly concerned over mounting tensions and the ongoing military build-up. He called for the exercise of maximum restraint by all concerned, as well as the guarantee of the safety and security of the unarmed United Nations military observers.[12]

[9] SG/SM/11686, 7 July 2008; SG/SM/11735, 7 August 2008.

[10] SC/9417, 5951st Meeting (AM), 8 August 2008.

[11] Ibid.

[12] SG/SM/11739, 10 August 2008; SC/9419, 5953rd Meeting (AM), 10 August 2008.

On 10 August 2008, the Security Council held a third emergency meeting on the situation in South Ossetia, at the request of the United States. The United Nations had no first-hand information from the area and relied largely on conflicting media reports. Georgia claimed its troops had withdrawn from South Ossetia, but the withdrawal was disputed by Russian sources. In Abkhazia, the Abkhaz side pushed Georgian armed forces out of the Upper Kodori Valley.[13]

The United States said the conflict had widened with the launch of a Russian-backed offensive in Georgia's Abkhaz region. The United States claimed Russia's military operations went beyond protection of its peacekeepers and civilians in South Ossetia and the Security Council should stop the violence and return to the status quo prevailing before 6 August. Russia argued that the Council meetings on the situation resulted from the aggression by Georgia against South Ossetia. Georgia's action in South Ossetia caused deaths of 12 Russian peacekeepers and 2000 people.[14]

France was alarmed by the expansion of the conflict and President Nicolas Sarkozy, acting on behalf of the European Union, led a diplomatic effort to reach a ceasefire. He brokered a six-point peace plan, announced in Moscow on 12 August 2008. The plan included six principles to resolve the situation in South Ossetia: the commitment to renounce the use of force, the immediate cessation of all military action, free access to humanitarian aid, the withdrawal of Georgian forces to their bases, the withdrawal of Russian forces to their positions before the fighting, and the convening of international discussion on security arrangements for Abkhazia and South Ossetia. Russia and Georgia accepted the peace plan on 13 August 2008. Georgia supported a solution based on full respect for its territorial integrity and sovereignty. Abkhaz authorities stated that they considered it necessary to maintain the presence of a considerable contingent of Russian peacekeepers on their territory. South Ossetian authorities declared that they would accept only Russian peacekeepers.[15]

[13] SC/9419, 5953rd Meeting (AM), 10 August 2008.

[14] Ibid.

[15] SC/9419, 5953rd Meeting (AM), 10 August 2008; SG/SM/11743, 13 August 2008; SG/SM/11748-IHA/1266, 14 August 2008; SC/9429, 5961st Meeting (PM), 19 August 2008; Press Conference by Permanent Representative of Georgia, 14 August 2008; SC/9429, 5961st Meeting (PM), 19 August 2008.

On 19 August 2008, the Security Council held an urgent meeting, called for by France, due to the continuing military operations in Georgia. Official sources cited that some 158,000 people had been displaced, some 74 Russian military and 215 Georgian military killed, and more than 2100 people had been killed in the conflict, but Georgia disputed those figures.[16]

The representative of Georgia claimed that despite the agreed ceasefire, the whole territory of Abkhazia and South Ossetia and towns in Georgia were under Russian occupation. Russian troops had invaded an independent country under the aegis of a peacekeeping operation. President Saakashvili of Georgia had approved the ceasefire terms on the understanding that this would lead immediately to a cessation of hostilities and to the *status quo* as of 6 August. That did not happen, and the Russian military offensive continued to expand. Georgia was prepared to respond to any legitimate concerns of South Ossetia and Abkhazia, but the ceasefire had to be backed by a Security Council resolution.[17]

The representative of France stated that one thing had become clear: Georgia's military actions in South Ossetia had been met with unreasonable force by Russia. The ensuing situation was threatening peace and stability in the entire region. The United States was ready to engage in international discussions on the modalities for security and stability in Abkhazia and South Ossetia, but within internationally recognized borders. The representative of the Russian Federation stated that the whole region had been destroyed, owing to the actions of Georgia. Russia's withdrawal would be commensurate with the effectiveness of the implementation of the obligations by Georgia.[18]

On 26 August 2008, the Russian Federation recognized Abkhazia and South Ossetia as independent states and, on 28 August, Georgia's Parliament declared the two territories occupied by a Russian force. Vitaly Churkin, Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation, speaking at a UN Headquarters press conference, said that Russia's positions remained intact even after the unilateral declaration of independence by Kosovo, but the attack against South Ossetia on the night

[16] SC/9429, 5961st Meeting (PM), 19 August 2008.

[17] Ibid.

[18] Ibid.

of 8 August, and the preparation of a similar action against Abkhazia, left them no other choice but to ensure their security and the right to exist through self-determination as independent States. The decision of the western Powers to recognize Kosovo's independence provided additional impetus to all those working for their independence. Georgia's emphasis on its relationship with NATO alarmed Abkhazia and South Ossetia and had created certain frictions between Russia and Georgia.[19]

Irakli Alasania, Permanent Representative of Georgia, speaking at a UN Headquarters press conference after his Russian counterpart, appealed for collective action to condemn and reject Russia's decision for the sake of preserving the fundamental basis of international law and order. Russia's unilateral recognition of Georgian provinces as independent was a breach of the fundamental norms and principles of international law and directly contradicted all United Nations Security Council resolutions and the United Nations Charter.[20]

UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon welcomed the initiative of President Nicolas Sarkozy of France and reiterated the need to fully implement the proposed plan. He expressed regrets that ongoing efforts to find a common solution within the Security Council to the crisis in Georgia had been complicated as developments would have wider implications for security and stability in the Caucasus.[21]

After the Russian decision to recognize the independence of Abkhazia and Ossetia, the status of the UNOMIG inspired comparisons with the status of the UN Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK). While there was still resolution 1244 in place and no Security Council decision was made, the UNMIK mission was being wound down according to the plan submitted by the Secretary-General. The Spokesman for UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon proposed that they should not compare the situations in Kosovo and Abkhazia, as the history of the two situations was different.[22]

[19] Press Conference by Vitaly Churkin, Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation, 26 August 2008; SC/9438, 5969th Meeting (PM), 28 August 2008; SC/9470, 5992nd Meeting (PM), 9 October 2008.

[20] Press Conference by Irakli Alasania, Permanent Representative of Georgia, 26 August 2008.

[21] SG/SM/11760, 26 August 2008; DPB, 27 August 2008.

[22] DPB, 27 August 2008.

The situation in and around the Georgian-Abkhaz conflict zone remained tense. The UNOMIG could not obtain appropriate security guarantees for the resumption of normal patrolling in some sectors. Georgia requested a meeting of the Security Council on the unilateral act of the Russian Federation concerning South Ossetia and Abkhazia, to send the strongest message by the Security Council about such action. Russia explained it had recognized the independence of Abkhazia and South Ossetia to ensure the survival of the population in the face of Georgian repression. As for the importance of complying with Security Council resolutions, Russia asked where these concerns had been during the declaration of independence by Kosovo.[23]

France, speaking on behalf of the European Union, said the Council had reaffirmed the territorial integrity of Georgia, but Russia had stated that the United Nations had failed in Georgia. Military action could not be recognized as a valid way to redefine the borders of neighbours. The United Kingdom said that Russian military action and its recognition of the independence of Abkhazia and South Ossetia was a unilateral attempt to redraw the borders through the use of force. The military action in Kosovo in 1999 had been carried out for a humanitarian purpose and Kosovo had moved for independence after 9 years of United Nations administration. In the Georgia situation, Russia had taken only three weeks to move militarily under the pretext of humanitarian action. The United States condemned Russia's decision to recognize Abkhazia and South Ossetia. The recognition was incompatible with the provisions of the United Nations Charter and of Security Council resolutions. Resolution 1808 (2008) reaffirmed the commitment of all Member States to the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of Georgia within internationally recognized borders. In the end, the Council had not been able to endorse the French agreement signed by the four parties involved in the conflict in Georgia.[24]

On 8 September 2008, President Nicolas Sarkozy, acting on behalf of the European Union, and the President of the Russian Federation elaborated a number of provisions for the implementation of the 12 August six-point plan. After the end of hostilities, there was little clarity as to the military situation and the future role of UNOMIG. In that context, the

[23] SC/9438, 5969th Meeting (PM), 28 August 2008.

[24] Ibid.

Secretary-General recommended a technical extension of the Mission's mandate for four months. On 9 October 2008, the Security Council extended the UNOMIG's mandate until 15 February 2009.[25]

The developments in August 2008 dramatically affected the regional context. Russia recognized Abkhazia's independence and Georgia withdrew from the May 1994 Moscow Agreement on a Ceasefire and Separation of Forces. On 15 October 2008, the Collective Peacekeeping Forces of the CIS was officially terminated after 14 years. On 23 October Georgia declared Abkhazia and South Ossetia as "occupied territories". On 4 November, the Parliament of the Russian Federation ratified the Russia-Abkhaz and Russia-South Ossetia treaties on friendship, cooperation and mutual assistance. [26]

Under those circumstances, the United Nations, the European Union and the OSCE, and delegations from Georgia, the Russian Federation and the United States, as well as Abkhaz and South Ossetian representatives, discussed in Geneva joint incident prevention and response mechanisms, but no agreement was reached. Therefore, on 13 February 2009, the Security Council, adopting resolution 1866, extended the mandate of the UNOMIG until 15 June 2009.[27]

Since the Security Council extended UNOMIG's mandate, the security situation in the Mission's area of responsibility has remained fragile. UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon proposed a new security regime for UNMIG to help stabilize the Abkhazia region and ensure a viable role for the United Nations there. Ban Ki-moon believed a new security regime needed to allow for regular UN patrol of the Kodori valley, with security and full freedom of movement. The Georgian Ambassador Alexander Lomaia accused the Russian Federation of using its position as a permanent member of the Security Council to pressure UN Secretariat officials into altering the content of the Secretary-General's report. Ban Ki-moon categorically rejected these claims. He tried to avoid unnecessary politicization of the debate among members of the Security Council and reflected his view of what all members could live with.[28]

[25] SC/9470, 5992nd Meeting (PM), 9 October 2008.

[26] SC/9594, 6082nd Meeting (AM), 13 February 2009.

[27] Ibid.

[28] Press Conference by Alexander Lomaia, Permanent Representative of Georgia, 27 May 2009; SG/SM/12274, 28 May 2009.

The Security Council, and the Group of Friends of the Secretary-General in particular, undertook painstaking consultations on extension of the UNOMIG mission. After intensive talks and negotiations on the presence of a United Nations force in Georgia, the Group proposed a technical rollover of the mandate. While there was consensus among Council members on the positive role of the United Nations in Georgia, those fundamental agreements did not enable a consensus to extend the mandate of the UNOMIG mission.[29]

As a result, the UNOMIG ended on 15 June 2009, when a proposal to extend its mandate for an additional two weeks to allow reaching agreement on a new security regime in the region failed to pass, owing to a veto exercised by Russia. The draft resolution was defeated by a vote of 10 in favour to 1 against (Russia), with 4 abstentions (China, Libya, Uganda, Viet Nam).[30]

The Russian Federation's representative argued that the prior mandate of UNOMIG had ceased to exist with the attack in South Ossetia on 8 August 2008 and security could only be achieved through a new regime. The attack led to the emergence of the Republic of Abkhazia and the Republic of South Ossetia. Some Member States supported the technical rollover to allow the Security Council to continue negotiations. France and its partners proposed a technical rollover, virtually a copy of the previous technical rollover approved by the Council. France called on all parties in the area to respect Georgia's territorial integrity within its internationally recognized boarders. The United States regretted the outcome; nevertheless, there was a need to consider a Georgia without a United Nations presence. Viet Nam argued that the Council should consider the new realities on the ground in the region. The United Kingdom continued to recognize the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Georgia within internationally recognized borders.[31]

The Security Council was unable to reach agreement on the future of a United Nations mission in Georgia due to the lack of agreement. The Secretary-General, in accordance with this outcome, instructed his Special Representative to take all measures required to cease the operations of the UNOMIG. Ban Ki-moon regretted the Security Council's

[29] SC/9681, 6143rd Meeting (Night), 15 June 2009.

[30] Ibid.

[31] Ibid.

inability to reach agreement on his proposals to stabilize the situation on the ground. The UNOMIG mission ceased its operations effective 16 June 2009.[32]

Georgia regretted the termination of the Mission which had played an important role in bringing a level of security and stability to the Abkhaz region. After failure to extend the UNOMIG mandate, the issue disappeared from the Security Council's agenda. The only venue left open to Georgia was the General Assembly. The situation on the ground remained unchanged. Georgia maintained that the unilateral declarations by Abkhazia and South Ossetia of their independence were illegal, as was their recognition. For the same reason, Georgia did not recognize the independence of Kosovo. Some countries decided not to recognize Abkhazia and South Ossetia as independent States. Georgia filed a case with the International Court of Justice concerning the application of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, but the Court's ruling was disappointing.[33]

The UNOMIG had monitored the ceasefire ending the Georgian-Abkhaz conflict since 1994. Dramatic changes followed the outbreak of hostilities in South Ossetia on 7 and 8 August 2008 and profoundly impacted conditions in the Georgian-Abkhaz zone and the overall conflict-settlement process. The Secretary-General argued that the tragic developments of August 2008 were not entirely unexpected. There was very serious deterioration in relations between the Georgian and Abkhaz sides over the few years. The context in which the Mission had operated had changed considerably. UNOMIG ended on 15 June 2009, when a draft resolution extending its mandate for just two weeks, failed to pass, concluding a United Nations presence in the region, at a time when a ceasefire regime was already eroding.[34]

The Secretary-General's observation that the tragic developments of August 2008 risked destabilizing the wider region was not entirely unexpected. He noted that a number of external developments, including

[32] SG/SM/12315-SC/9682, 15 June 2009.

[33] SC/9681, 6143rd Meeting (Night), 15 June 2009; Press Conference by Minister for Foreign Affairs of Georgia, 19 April 2010; Press Conference by Minister for Foreign Affairs of Georgia, Grigol Vashadze, 1 April 2011.

[34] SC/9681, 6143rd Meeting (Night), 15 June 2009; SC/9419, 5953rd Meeting (AM), 10 August 2008; DPB, 6 October 2008; SC/9470, 5992nd Meeting (PM), 9 October 2008.

those related to Kosovo, contributed to a general climate of polarization in which joint international action to contain local conflicts became more and more difficult. The issues of regional peace and stability, relations with the Euro-Atlantic community, consideration and addressing seriously each other's legitimate security concerns in the volatile context were among factors that also contributed to a general climate of polarization in Ukraine, which caught the attention of the UN and Ban Ki-moon.[35]

[35] DPB, 6 October 2008.

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CHAPTER 13

Ukraine: Time for Cool Heads to Prevail

> In a wider perspective, we should recall that the Russian Federation and Ukraine remain neighbours, with close, often complex, historic, cultural, economic and political ties. It is our view that it is in the interest of all of us that these two nations have positive ties, with each other and with the broader region.
>
> UN Deputy Secretary-General Jan Eliasson[1]

In the fall of 2013, Ukraine and its President Viktor Yanukovych faced serious economic challenges and decisions, including the signing of an agreement on association with the European Union. The association agreement, portrayed as a choice between Europe and Russia, provoked deep political crisis. The central square in the Ukrainian capital Kyiv became a place of violent confrontations between demonstrators and law enforcement. The United Nations Secretary-General expressed his grave concern about the situation to the President of Ukraine and appealed for peaceful dialogue among all parties concerned.[2]

In January and February 2014, the unrest in Ukraine further escalated. Violent clashes between riot police and protesters in the Maidan protest area in Kyiv resulted in fatalities and injuries. The Secretary-General was increasingly alarmed by the level of bloodshed, and

[1] DSG/SM/757-SC/11330, 19 March 2014.

[2] SC/11302, 7124th Meeting, 1 March 2014; GA/11493, Sixty-eighth General Assembly Plenary, 80th Meeting, 27 March 2014; DPB, 9 December 2013.

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M. Jesenský, *The United Nations under Ban Ki-moon*,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-12220-1_13

particularly appalled by the use of firearms by both police and protesters. On 21 February 2014, President Viktor Yanukovych and opposition leaders reached the agreement, signed also by the Foreign Ministers of Germany, France and Poland, on a process for the settlement of the crisis in Ukraine.[3]

Nevertheless, the violence and protests continued, and the President had been compelled to leave Ukraine. The events in Kyiv polarized the country, in particular its Russophone population. The eastern part of Ukraine perceived the removal of President Yanukovych from office as unconstitutional. In addition, one of the first decisions of the new Ukrainian authorities was to revoke the status of the Russian language.[4]

Ban Ki-moon urged all Ukrainians to express their differences peacefully and through dialogue and called for an inclusive political process that would reflect the aspirations of all and preserve the country's unity and territorial integrity. He dispatched his Senior Adviser Robert Serry to Kyiv to assure all Ukrainians of the support of the United Nations.[5]

The situation in Ukraine continued to deteriorate and there was a mounting separatist movement in the south-east of the country and in Crimea. On 1 March 2014, UN Deputy Secretary-General Jan Eliasson reported to the Security Council that key sites in Crimea continued to be blocked by unidentified armed men. The new Crimean authorities appealed to the President of the Russian Federation to restore order on the territory of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea. The Representative of the United States claimed that Russian forces had taken over border posts, ferry terminals and nearly all military bases in Crimea. The Representative of Ukraine informed that Russian forces were occupying parts of Crimea. He explained that President Yanukovych had left the country and therefore, describing subsequent events as a *coup d'état* were not correct, they constituted a revolution.[6]

[3] SG/SM/15650, 18 February 2014; DPB, 19 February 2014; DPB, 20 February 2014; SG/SM/15659, 21 February 2014.

[4] GA/11493, Sixty-eighth General Assembly, Plenary 80th Meeting, 27 March 2014; SC/11302, 7124th Meeting (PM), 1 March 2014.

[5] DPB, 24 February 2014; DPB, 25 February 2014.

[6] DPB, 26 February 2014; DPB, 28 February 2014; DSG/SM/751-SC/11303, 1 March 2014; SC/11302, 7124th Meeting, 1 March 2014; SC/11305, 7125th Meeting (PM), 3 March 2014.

The situations in Ukraine and Crimea unfolded rapidly. On 11 March 2014, Crimea unilaterally proclaimed independence from Ukraine. Kyiv responded by announcing that if the Crimean Parliament failed to reconsider its declaration by 12 March, the Parliament of Ukraine would terminate powers of the Verkhovna Rada of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea. Arseniy Yatsenyuk, Prime Minister of Ukraine, reminded the Security Council that his country had abandoned its nuclear weapons programme in 1994 under the Budapest Memorandum guaranteeing Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity. The Russian Federation's actions were in violation of a number of treaties signed by the two countries. The Representative of the Russian Federation argued that the legitimately elected President of Ukraine had been overthrown through the use of force, which was illegal. Citing the example of Kosovo, Ambassador Churkin recalled that France had vetoed a draft resolution on the sovereignty of Comoros following a referendum held in Mayotte.[7]

The Security Council accorded serious attention to developments in Ukraine, considering the situation in Ukraine seven times between 1 and 15 March 2014. On 15 March, the Security Council failed to adopt a draft resolution, due to Russia's veto, urging Member States not to recognize the results of the upcoming referendum in Ukraine's autonomous Crimea. Russia argued the self-determination case had arisen in Crimea from a legal vacuum following the unconstitutional *coup d'état*. In fact, Crimea had been part of Russia until 1954. Ambassador Power of the United States contended that Crimea was part of Ukraine unless and until its status was changed in line with Ukrainian and international law.[8]

The Crimean authorities held a referendum on Crimea's status on 16 March 2014 and announced that close to 97% of those who voted, approved leaving Ukraine and joining Russia. Subsequently, Crimea declared its independence, which was recognized by the Russian Federation. On 17 March, the European Union and the United States adopted targeted sanctions against Russian and Crimean officials. On 18 March, President Vladimir Putin signed a treaty, making Crimea part of the Russian Federation.[9]

[7] SG/SM/15698, 10 March 2014; SC/11314, 7134th Meeting, 13 March 2014.

[8] SC/11319, 7138th Meeting, 15 March 2014; SC/11314, 7134th Meeting, 13 March 2014.

[9] DSG/SM/757-SC/11330, 19 March 2014.

Following the referendum, the Secretary-General, the United Nations and the international community faced the dilemma whether the annexation/self-determination of Crimea was legal or not, according to the UN Charter. Moscow maintained that it was legal, whereas Washington, Paris and London claimed it was illegal. Ban Ki-moon resorted to high-profile diplomacy and visited Moscow and Kyiv to de-escalate tensions. He told President Putin that he understood his legitimate concerns relating to the situation of Russian minorities in Ukraine. At the same time Ban Ki-moon reiterated the Acting President of Ukraine that this crisis could only be solved through peaceful, diplomatic solutions based on the principles of the Charter.[10]

On 27 March 2014, the General Assembly adopted, by a vote of 100 in favour to 11 against, with 58 abstentions, a resolution on the territorial integrity of Ukraine. The resolution called not to recognize any change in the status of Crimea or the city of Sevastopol. Before the vote, the wider United Nations membership expressed its view on the question. Ukraine repeated that its territory had been forcibly annexed. Russia blamed Kiyv for creating the situation leading Crimeans to make their decision. The European Union did not recognize the referendum in Crimea and strongly condemned the illegal annexation of Crimea and Sevastopol to Russia. Saint Vincent and the Grenadines regretted the Assembly had failed to consider the historical context of the geopolitical dispute and the nature of the regime change. Several delegations had abstained because the complexity of the situation required the international community to act in a balanced manner.[11]

In April 2014, the situation in Ukraine seriously deteriorated once again. Armed demonstrators seized Government buildings in eastern Ukraine, including in the cities of Donetsk, Luhansk and Kharkiv, and called for secession from Ukraine and for joining Russia. The demonstrators declared the "Donetsk People's Republic" and "Luhansk People's Republic." Authorities in Kyiv launched a large-scale counter-terrorism operation to prevent the scenario in Crimea repeating itself in eastern

[10] DPB, 20 March 2014; DPB, 25 March 2014.

[11] GA/11493, Sixty-eighth General Assembly, Plenary, 80th Meeting, 27 March 2014.

Ukraine. Russia put the situation in April 2014 side by side with the situation in December 2013 and January 2014, and publicly urged Kyiv not to employ force against demonstrators.[12]

The new presidential election in Ukraine, held on 25 May 2014, was welcomed as a step in the right direction. Newly elected President Petro Poroshenko announced his peace plan. The plan foresaw the adoption of a constitutional reform package that included the decentralization of power, special status for the Russian language, as well as early local and parliamentary elections. Kiyv launched investigations into the tragic events of 2 May 2014 in Odessa, and in the Maidan events between November 2013 and February 2014. On 27 June 2014, President Poroshenko signed the Association Agreement between the European Union and Ukraine, stating it was the most important day for his country after Independence Day. Three days later, the President announced the end of the 10-day ceasefire and the fighting between Government forces and armed groups in the eastern part of the country intensified.[13]

On 17 July 2014, a civilian aircraft on an international flight, Malaysia Airlines flight MH17, crashed in Donetsk Oblast, in eastern Ukraine, with the loss of all 298 passengers and crew on board. The Secretary-General strongly condemned the downing. The United Nations had no immediate independent verification of the circumstances regarding the downing of the plane.[14]

On 21 July 2014, the Security Council unanimously adopted resolution 2166 (2014) deploring the downing of Malaysia Airlines flight MH17 and demanding to establish accountability. The Council demanded that all military activities, including by armed groups, immediately cease in the area surrounding the crash site. Ukraine accused the separatists of bringing down the aircraft and hampering an investigation. Russia observed that in 2001, a Russian flight travelling over the Black Sea had been shot down and Ukraine had refuted its responsibility.[15]

[12]SC/11351, 7154th Meeting, 13 April 2014; SC/11358, 7157th Meeting, 16 April 2014.

[13]SC/11417, 7185th Meeting, 28 May 2014; SC/11448, 7205th Meeting, 24 June 2014; DPB, 30 June 2014; SC/11481, 7219th Meeting, 18 July 2014.

[14]SC/11481, 7219th Meeting, 18 July 2014; SG/SM/16039, 18 July 2014; DPB, 21 July 2014.

[15]SC/11483, 7221st Meeting, 21 July 2014.

In the summer of 2014, fighting in Donetsk and Luhansk intensified. Forensic teams and international investigators, tasked to probe the downing of Malaysia Airlines flight MH17, continued to be impeded from accessing the crash site due to heavy fighting. Violence and insecurity steadily worsened humanitarian situation. The UN confirmed that the 3.9 million people living in the conflict zone faced imminent security threats and some people from Luhansk and Donetsk were fleeing to Russia. Amidst this deteriorating humanitarian situation, Russian aid convoys started to cross into Ukraine without the permission of the Ukrainian authorities. This was followed with deep concern, as exacerbating an already dangerous situation.[16]

The Security Council discussed the new wave of escalation and spreading violence in eastern Ukraine. The United Nations had no independent means of verifying the deeply alarming reports of alleged Russian military involvement. Russia admitted that there were Russian volunteers in eastern Ukraine and called on other countries with their advisers to also be more transparent. Ukraine insisted the Russian aggression against Ukraine started with Crimea and was waged through armed groups.[17]

On 9 September 2014, the Dutch Safety Board presented the early results of its investigation into the downing of Malaysia Airline flight MH17. The preliminary report asserted that the plane broke apart over Ukraine due to penetration by a large number of high-energy objects. There was no indication of technical problems and the aircraft disintegrated in the air. But the report left crucial questions; who was responsible for downing the aircraft and what exactly happened, unanswered. Ukraine claimed the plane was downed by a Russian missile fired by Russian-backed rebels. Russia maintained the report did not claim a missile was responsible, nor did it exclude a military aircraft's role.[18]

The Presidents of Ukraine and Russia, Petro Poroshenko and Vladimir Putin, officially met for the first time and started political settlement of the crisis. Their talks on 26 August 2014 in Minsk, led to the de-escalation of one of the worst crises in Europe since the end of the cold war. In September 2014, Ukraine and Russia signed the Minsk

[16]SG/SM/16057, 30 July 2014; SC/11508, 7234th Meeting, 5 August 2014; SC/11516, 7239th Meeting, 8 August 2014; SG/SM/16097, 22 August 2014.

[17]SC/11541, 7253rd Meeting, 28 August 2014.

[18]SC/11569, 7269th Meeting, 19 September 2014. For the Dutch Safety Board's preliminary investigation report, see S/2014/657, 9 September 2014.

agreement, the Minsk Protocol on ending the conflict, and a follow-up Memorandum that clarified ceasefire issues. The agreements included the ceasefire, exchange of a number of detained persons and Ukraine's decentralization, including a special status for certain areas in Donetsk and Luhansk.[19]

On 26 October 2014, Kiyv organized early parliamentary elections. The prospect of a new ruling coalition brought about a positive atmosphere and President Poroshenko presented his road map out of the conflict. On 2 November 2014, the rebels organized their elections in Donetsk and Luhansk, which had been condemned as unconstitutional by Kiyv, deplored by many in the international community, but respected by Russia as the demonstration of people's will. In December 2014, the Ukrainian parliament cancelled the non-aligned status of the country, which opened the way for Ukraine's eventual membership in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO).[20]

Although the Minsk accords of September 2014 had established the nominal truce in eastern Ukraine, in the spring of 2015 the situation reached an impasse on the diplomatic and political front. A sustainable ceasefire existed in name only. Kiyv claimed that Russia had annexed Crimea and Sevastopol, and that it continued its aggression against Ukraine by supporting armed opposition in the Donetsk and Luhansk regions. Moscow claimed the new Ukrainian authorities came to power in a *coup d'état* and conducted a punitive military action in the east in total disregard for international law.[21]

In the spring of 2015, the humanitarian crisis in eastern Ukraine had reached staggering proportions. Within a year, the crisis displaced 850,000 Ukrainians internally and 600,000 in neighbouring countries. The leaders and foreign ministers of Germany, France, Russia and Ukraine, the so-called Normandy Format, searched for a halt to the violence. Their intensive diplomatic talks led to the signing of a package of measures in Minsk, Belarus, on 12 February 2015, paving the way for a broader political settlement of the conflict. Angela Merkel, François Hollande, Vladimir Putin and Petro Poroshenko agreed there

[19]SC/11541, 7253rd Meeting, 28 August 2014; SG/SM/16106, 28 August 2014; DPB, 21 October 2014; SC/11614, 7287th Meeting, 24 October 2014.

[20]SC/11645, 7311th Meeting, 12 November 2014; DPB, 23 December 2014.

[21]SC/11746, 7365th SC Meeting, 21 January 2015.

was no alternative to an exclusively peaceful settlement, reaffirmed their full respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine, and agreed to establish an oversight mechanism in the Normandy format.[22]

The Security Council, by its resolution 2202 (2015), called on all parties to fully implement the agreed "package" of measures, a comprehensive ceasefire, the withdrawal of all heavy weapons by both sides, and decentralization and the special status of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions by the end of 2015. Following the ceasefire in February 2015, there had been a significant reduction of hostilities. Despite progress on the ground the situation in Ukraine remained fragile and far from irreversible.[23]

In May 2015, the Secretary-General visited Poland, Ukraine and the Russian Federation to take part in events marking the end of the Second World War. He was reassured by Presidents Poroshenko and Putin of their continued commitments to a peaceful resolution of the Ukraine conflict. While the situation in eastern Ukraine remained tenuous, the ceasefire continued to be largely held in the conflict zone. The Minsk agreements, as well as a political process towards the normalization of the situation, were under way.[24]

One year after the tragedy of Malaysia Airlines flight MH17, the Security Council failed to adopt a resolution establishing an international tribunal for the incident. The draft resolution, presented by Malaysia on behalf of the Joint Investigation Team (Australia, Belgium, Malaysia, Ukraine and the Netherlands), received support of 11 votes, three abstentions (Angola, China and Venezuela) and a negative vote from Russia. Malaysia explained that the establishment of the tribunal would ensure that the prosecution would be as depoliticized as possible. Russia opposed its creation, as the Council had not established international tribunals when Ukraine had brought down a Russian aircraft in 2001 and the United States had brought down an Iranian aircraft in 1988. Some other countries found the establishment of an international tribunal premature.[25]

[22]DPB, 22 January 2015; DPB, 6 February 2015; DPB, 11 February 2015; SG/SM/16527, 12 February 2015; SC/11785, 7384th Meeting, 17 February 2015.

[23]SC/11785, 7384th Meeting, 17 February 2015; SC/11796, 7391st Meeting, 24 February 2015; SC/11803, 7395th Meeting, 27 February 2015; DPB, 4 May 2015; SC/11809, 7400th Meeting, 6 March 2015.

[24]DPB, 4 May 2015; SC/11920, 7457th Meeting, 5 June 2015.

[25]SC/11990, 7498th Meeting, 29 July 2015.

At the end of 2015, the situation in eastern Ukraine remained tense and volatile. Some 2.7 million people were living in very difficult conditions in the self-proclaimed "Donetsk People's Republic" and "Luhansk People's Republic," and 800,000 people lived in dangerous conditions along the line between those republics and the Government-controlled area. The majority of the provisions of the Minsk Agreements remained unimplemented and a failure to find a compromise threatened the whole political process.[26]

Despite all efforts, in the spring of 2016, the situation in eastern Ukraine remained fragile and prone to escalation. Implementation of the Minsk Agreements seemed the only way towards a sustainable political solution, stabilization of ceasefires and rebuilding trust. Amid debates over proliferation of transnational threats, the NATO approved a plan to expand its military presence in Ukraine, the Baltic States and in Central and Eastern Europe.[27]

Despite some positive developments, the overall situation in eastern Ukraine remained precarious and unsustainable with escalating violence and political gridlock. The failure to fully implement the "Package of Measures for the Implementation of the Minsk Agreements" underscored the need for progress towards the political settlement of a conflict entering its third year. Although some positive developments had been registered, including a largely respected ceasefire, those positive steps had been undermined to some extent by the precarious and unsustainable overall situation in the conflict area. The number of conflict-related casualties had risen to 30,729, including 9333 people killed and 21,396 injured. The conflict ruined the socioeconomic infrastructure of Donbas, once Ukraine's industrial powerhouse, and Ukraine had lost more than 20% of its gross domestic product due to the conflict. Although resolution 2202 (2015) called on all parties in Ukraine to implement the Minsk agreements, particularly provisions relating to a ceasefire, the withdrawal of heavy weapons, the adoption of constitutional reforms and local elections in Donbas, it appeared that progress made was meagre.[28]

[26]DSG/SM/925-SC/12155, 11 December 2015; SC/12154, 7576th Meeting, 11 December 2015.

[27]SC/12263, 7635th Meeting, 29 February 2016; DPB, 11 February 2016.

[28]SC/12345, 7683rd Meeting, 29 April 2016.

On 28 September 2016, the Joint Investigation Team, made up of police and judicial authorities from the Netherlands, Ukraine, Australia, Malaysia and Belgium, presented preliminary results of its criminal investigation into the downing of Malaysian Airways flight MH17. Given that resolution 2166 (2014) demanded that all those responsible for the incident be held to account, it was anticipated that the final conclusion of the criminal investigation, together with those of the technical investigation led by the Dutch Safety Board that identified the cause of the crash, would be crucial in bringing the perpetrators to justice.[29]

In December 2016, the failure to implement the Minsk Agreements in eastern Ukraine continued to result in a host of human rights violations for civilians, particularly those living close to the so-called "contact line" between territories controlled by the Government and the *de facto* authorities of Donetsk and Luhansk. Government forces and armed groups operating in civilian areas did not take all feasible precautions against the effects of fighting, resulting in damage to schools, kindergartens and medical facilities. Some 9371 people had been killed and 21,532 others injured in eastern Ukraine since the conflict began in mid-April 2014. After two years of conflict, the situation remained volatile, deeply worrying and continued to have a severe impact on people there. It was apparent that without additional efforts to implement the Minsk agreements, the situation in eastern Ukraine could develop into a protracted conflict.[30]

For some Member States the crisis in Ukraine in 2013–2014 started with illegal annexation of Crimea by Russia, whereas for Russia, the crisis in Ukraine began with the overthrowing of a democratically elected President. Russia believed that the protests and *coup d'état* supported from outside had led to the social and economic crisis in Ukraine. For the United States, Russia continued to occupy Crimea in violation of a number of international resolutions and continued to arm, train and fight alongside separatists. Ukraine saw Crimea under occupation and

[29] DPB, 28 September 2016.

[30] DPB, 3 June 2016; DPB, 8 December 2016.

Donbas under attack. Apparently, the Minsk agreements remained the best and the only available viable and accepted path to resolving the conflict. All parties needed work towards a durable political solution. Greater political will and flexibility had to be demonstrated by all concerned.[31]

The situation in eastern Ukraine remained volatile and without additional efforts to implement the Minsk agreements, it could develop into a "protracted conflict." The issues of regional peace and stability, relations with the Euro-Atlantic community, legitimate security concerns in the Euro-Asian space needed to be addressed. Deputy Secretary-General Jan Eliasson appealed for cool heads to prevail: "In a wider perspective, we should recall that the Russian Federation and Ukraine remain neighbours, with close, often complex, historic, cultural, economic and political ties. It is our view that it is in the interest of all of us that these two nations have positive ties, with each other and with the broader region."[32] This call for a good-faith effort by all parties, dialogue, and patient diplomacy also extended to Iran's nuclear programme which became the object not only of bilateral, but especially of multilateral diplomacy.

[31] SC/11920, 7457th SC Meeting, 5 June 2015; SC/12154, 7576th SC Meeting, 11 December 2015; DSG/SM/925-SC/12155, 11 December 2015.

[32] DSG/SM/757-SC/11330, 19 March 2014.

PART IV

Multilateral Diplomacy

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CHAPTER 14

Iran's Nuclear Programme: A Triumph of Diplomacy

> Iran and all the Powers, P5+1 (China, France, Russian Federation, United Kingdom, United States, Germany), they have made a very good agreement.
>
> UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon[1]

The Islamic Republic of Iran is part of a region, which is due to its geopolitical and strategic position, at the centre of global attention. The region is the centre of the world's energy supply and home to the largest number of tensions and crises.[2]

On 3 January 2006, Iran informed the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) that it had decided to resume its voluntarily suspended enrichment-related and reprocessing activities. Suspension had been in place since November 2003, and the IAEA had repeatedly confirmed Iran's compliance.[3]

Subsequently, the IAEA informed the Security Council that it was no longer able to confirm absence of undeclared nuclear materials or activities in Iran. The Council acted for the first time on the Iranian nuclear issue on 29 March 2006. It issued a presidential statement noting with

[1] SG/SM/17420, 16 December 2015.

[2] Press Conference by Minister for Foreign Affairs of Iran, 2 July 2008.

[3] SC/8980, 5647th Meeting (PM), 24 March 2007; SC/8940, 2006 Round-up, 12 January 2007. The IAEA verifies, through its inspection system, States' compliance with their commitments to use nuclear material and facilities only for peaceful purposes. Ibid.

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M. Jesenský, *The United Nations under Ban Ki-moon*,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-12220-1_14

serious concern Iran's resumption of uranium enrichment-related activities and its suspension of cooperation with the IAEA. At the same time, the Agency was seeking clarity about all aspects of Iran's nuclear programme, as the existing gaps remained a matter of concern.[4]

In the second half of 2006, the Security Council returned to the Iranian nuclear issue. On 31 July, it requested Iran to suspend all enrichment-related and reprocessing activities. Finally, on 23 December 2006, the Council imposed sanctions on Iran, blocking the import or export of sensitive nuclear material and equipment. Adopting resolution 1737 (2016), the Council established the Committee to oversee the sanctions and decided that Iran should, without further delay, suspend all enrichment-related and reprocessing activities, including research and development.[5]

In 2007, the events surrounding the Iranian nuclear issue grew more worrisome. It became evident that the issue was impossible to resolve by imposing sanctions and pressure alone. Solution required all-around diplomatic efforts outside the Security Council. At the same time, the Council continued to increase its pressure on Iran. On 24 March 2007, the Council decided to widen its sanctions against Iran. Resolution 1747 (2007), submitted by France, Germany and the United Kingdom, informally known as the "EU 3," banned Iran's arms exports. The resolution, adopted unanimously, reflected concern of some countries about the genuine intentions of Iran's nuclear programme.[6]

Simultaneously, China, France, Russian Federation, United Kingdom, United States and Germany, the "P5+1," supported by the European Union, issued a joint statement. They deplored Iran's failure to comply with the earlier resolutions of the Security Council and IAEA and called upon Iran to comply fully with all its international obligations. The countries reiterated their commitment to a negotiated solution and restated their "suspension for suspension" proposal. The proposal would establish an IAEA-verified suspension of the Iranian activities for the duration of negotiations with parallel suspension of the implementation of the relevant Council measures.[7]

[4] Ibid.

[5] SC/8940, 12 January 2007; SC/8978, 5646th Meeting (AM), 23 March 2007.

[6] SC/8980, 5647th Meeting (PM), 24 March 2007.

[7] Statement on UN Security Council Resolution 1747, US State Department, Office of the Spokesman, 24 March 2007, accessed 21 May 2018, https://2001-2009.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2007/mar/82160.htm.

Some Council members urged Iran to provide the necessary assistance and cooperation to the IAEA to resume dialogue and to find a sustainable long-term solution. Qatar underlined that according to the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) Iran had the right to nuclear energy research and production for peaceful purposes. South Africa urged the Council to return to negotiations to prevent heightened tensions from spiralling out of control.[8]

The United States welcomed the unanimous passage of resolution 1747 (2007), a clear and unambiguous message, in fact, it expected the Council to incrementally increase pressure, in the face of Iran's continued defiance. On the contrary, Iran saw the Security Council being abused into unnecessary action against its peaceful nuclear programme. The Security Council resolutions did not indicate universal acceptance, as the Heads of State of nearly two-thirds of United Nations Members from the Non-Aligned Movement had supported Iran's positions. The Council, under the manifest pressure of a few permanent members, tried to deprive Iran of its inalienable right to develop nuclear technology for peaceful purposes.[9]

The war of words and tensions between western nations and Iran continued and there was even a talk about going to war against Iran. Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad dismissed allegations that Iran could be developing a nuclear bomb. He made it clear that Iran would not bow to pressure to abandon its right to develop nuclear energy for peaceful uses. Iran's nuclear programme went back 50 years, well before its revolution, to a contract signed with the United States.[10]

The IAEA and Iran concluded the agreement to resolve all outstanding issues concerning Iran's nuclear programme in August 2007. The United States insisted Iran was not complying with its obligations to suspend all proliferation-sensitive nuclear activities. Consequently, the Security Council had to remain seized of Iran's nuclear programme and Iran needed to suspend its activities to allow negotiations within the

[8] SC/8980, 5647th Meeting (PM), 24 March 2007.

[9] Ibid.

[10] SG/SM/11164, 18 September 2007; Press Conference by President of Iran, 25 September 2007; Press Conference by Minister for Foreign Affairs of Iran, 3 October 2007.

framework of the "P5 + 1"—the five permanent members of the Council and Germany.[11]

In December 2007, the new US National Intelligence Estimate indicated no concrete evidence of an ongoing nuclear weapons programme or undeclared nuclear facilities in Iran. IAEA Director General Mohamed ElBaradei believed this new US assessment tallied with the Agency's statements over the last few years and could help to defuse the crisis. At the same time, the Estimate should prompt Iran to work actively with the IAEA to clarify specific aspects of its past and present nuclear programme.[12]

On 3 March 2008, the Security Council approved a new round of sanctions against Iran. Indonesia abstained on resolution 1803 (2008), not convinced whether more sanctions would resolve the question because Iran was cooperating with IAEA. Iran noted that the latest IAEA report confirmed the full implementation of its work plan between Iran and the IAEA. Accordingly, Iran's nuclear issue should be dealt with exclusively by the Agency as the sole pertinent international organization. Certain countries, out of mere political motivations and based on totally baseless allegations, imposed on the Council Iran's peaceful nuclear programme. Nevertheless, the United States maintained that Iran had to cease its enrichment and heavy water-related activities. Otherwise, the Council would have to pursue a dual-track strategy of increased pressure on Iran while offering it the negotiating path.[13]

On 27 September 2008, the Security Council unanimously adopted resolution 1835 (2008), calling on Iran to suspend uranium-enrichment-related activities. Simultaneously, the Council reaffirmed its commitment to an early negotiated solution to the Iranian nuclear issue.[14]

In 2009, the United States reviewed its policy towards Iran. New President Barack Hussein Obama made clear the United States was

[11] SC/9205, 5807th Meeting (AM), 18 December 2007.

[12] DPB, 4 December 2007; Statement by IAEA Director General on New U.S. Intelligence Estimate on Iran, 4 December 2007, accessed 21 May 2018, https://www.iaea.org/newscenter/pressreleases/statement-iaea-director-general-new-us-intelligence-estimate-iran.

[13] SC/9268, 5848th Meeting (PM), 3 March 2008; SC/9276, 5853rd Meeting (AM), 17 March 2008.

[14] SC/9459, 5984th Meeting (PM), 27 September 2008.

prepared for engagement while his Administration pledged to ensure that Iran did not obtain nuclear weapons. The "P5 + 1" continued its dual track with Iran—sanctions if it did not suspend its enrichment activities, and dialogue if nuclear enrichment was suspended. Finally, in the fall 2009, Geneva hosted the first talks between the "P5+1" countries and Iran.[15]

In 2010, the concerns about Iran's nuclear programme persisted. The IAEA concluded once more that Iran was not complying with IAEA and Council obligations. In May, Turkey and Brazil attempted to reduce tensions over Iran's nuclear programme. They proposed to allow Iran to send low-enriched uranium to Turkey in return for fuel for a research reactor in Tehran. Turkey, Brazil and Iran signed the Tehran Declaration, designed as a confidence-building measure, providing for the use of nuclear energy and setting out ways to verify fully its peaceful purposes. The initiative provided a new opportunity for diplomacy.[16]

Instead, the Security Council decided to impose additional sanctions on Iran. On 9 June 2010, it adopted resolution 1929 (2010), co-sponsored by France, Germany, the United Kingdom and the United States. Brazil and Turkey voted against the resolution, Lebanon abstained. Brazil believed additional sanctions ran contrary to the efforts to engage with Iran on a negotiated solution. The Tehran Declaration showed that dialogue could do more than sanctions, and concerns without dialogue would not be resolved. Turkey was deeply concerned that additional sanctions would negatively affect the overall diplomatic process.[17]

The United States and France welcomed the initiative by Turkey and Brazil, but they maintained the initiative did not respond to the very real concerns. Lebanon believed the fuel swap deal negotiated by Turkey and Brazil provided a road towards resolving the problem. The sanctions represented a painful failure of diplomatic efforts. Iran claimed it had endured unfair pressures for many years due to the action of some

[15]SC/9610, 6090th Meeting (AM), 10 March 2009; Press Conference by Foreign Minister of Iran, 1 October 2009.

[16]SC/9873, 6280th Meeting (AM), 4 March 2010; SG/SM/12910, Press Conference by Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon at UN Headquarters, 24 May 2010; Press Conference by Security Council President (Vitaly Churkin) on Programme of Work for August, 3 August 2010; SC/9948, 6335th Meeting (AM), 9 June 2010.

[17]SC/9948, 6335th Meeting (AM), 9 June 2010.

countries. Few Western countries, instead of welcoming the initiative of Turkey and Brazil, had immediately introduced the new sanctions.[18]

After the new round of sanctions little had changed. Iran did not suspend its enrichment-related activities. The IAEA maintained that Iran's cooperation was still insufficient, and it was unable to provide credible assurance that nuclear activities were solely for peaceful purposes. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon maintained that the onus was on the Iranian side, to fully cooperate with the IAEA and to prove that their nuclear programme was for peaceful purposes. Thus, even with five years of the Security Council sanction regime under resolution 1737 (2006), doubts of some countries over the peaceful nature of Iran's nuclear programme continued.[19]

In 2012 confrontation between the West and Iran over the nature of the Iranian nuclear programme reached dangerous levels. The growing rhetoric and threats of confrontation threatened to destabilize the entire region and move perhaps beyond. The Review Conference of NPT mandated the Secretary-General to hold an international conference to discuss the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East. Ban Ki-moon visited Tehran to participate in the Non-Aligned Movement Summit. He maintained that all sides needed to tone down the rhetoric and that the only way to deal with the issue was through dialogue and peacefully.[20]

In September 2012, the Israeli Prime Minister made a dramatic presentation in the General Assembly, suggesting that, at times, countries could be forced to use military force against Iran's nuclear facilities. The Secretary-General observed that harsh tones and rhetoric were not helpful. It was clear that Iran needed to prove that its nuclear programme was for peaceful purposes, and to comply fully with the various Security Council resolutions in place.[21]

In 2013, amid continuing doubts about the character of its nuclear programme, Iran's new President, Hassan Rouhani, indicated readiness for greater dialogue and transparency on nuclear matters. The IAEA

[18] Ibid.

[19] SC/10206, 6502nd Meeting (PM), 22 March 2011; SC/10502, 6697th Meeting (AM), 21 December 2011; SG/SM/14083, 25 January 2012.

[20] SG/SM/14083, 25 January 2012; DPB, 22 August 2012; SC/10770, 6839th Meeting (AM), 20 September 2012; DPB, 5 September 2012.

[21] DPB, 28 September 2012.

and the new Iranian Administration resumed negotiations, and the talks between Iran and the five permanent Council members and Germany (the "P5+1") resumed thereafter. The potential for confrontation over Iran's nuclear programme thus dramatically diminished.[22]

On 24 November 2013, the P5+1 and Iran, reached in Geneva an interim agreement on the nuclear programme of Iran. Under the Joint Plan of Action Iran agreed to halt or roll back key parts of its programme. The agreement marked the readiness of the new Iranian authorities to cooperate with the P5+1 and the IAEA. Subsequently, after several years of little or no progress, the IAEA recognized that Iran's highly enriched uranium was decreasing, owing to the Joint Plan of Action. For the first time, the IAEA report reflected progress in Iran's cooperation with the IAEA.[23]

The P5+1 countries remained determined to reach a comprehensive settlement on Iran's nuclear programme. However, until a final agreement was reached, sanctions would stay in place. The 1737 Committee on Iran sanctions continued its monitoring and confirmed that Iran no longer possessed uranium enriched to 20% and did not enrich uranium above 5%.[24]

Negotiations between the permanent five members of the Security Council plus Germany and Iran continued in 2014 and 2015. UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon called on all participants to demonstrate the necessary flexibility and to bring the negotiations to a successful conclusion. In the spring of 2015, intensified negotiations drew near to the objective that Iran would never acquire a nuclear weapon and that its programme remained exclusively peaceful.[25]

The Israeli Prime Minister warned that any agreement would leave Iran on a threshold of producing a nuclear bomb. With the deal between the P5+1 countries and Iran looking imminent, Prime Minister

[22]SC/11062, 6999th Meeting (PM), 15 July 2013; SC/11110, 7028th Meeting (PM), 5 September 2013; SC/10856, 6888th Meeting (PM), 13 December 2012.

[23]SC/11212, 7082nd Meeting (PM), 12 December 2013; SC/11333, 7146th Meeting (PM), 20 March 2014.

[24]SC/11454, 7211th Meeting (PM), 25 June 2014; SC/11561, 7265th Meeting (PM), 15 September 2014.

[25]SG/SM/16354, 20 November 2014; SC/11830, 7412th Meeting (PM), 24 March 2015.

Netanyahu travelled to Washington in order to prevent it. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon supported an agreement with Iran as a boost for the efforts of nuclear non-proliferation.[26]

Finally, on 14 July 2015 in Vienna, the negotiating parties reached a historic agreement. The P5+1 countries, the group negotiating on the nuclear issue, China, France, Germany, the Russian Federation, the United Kingdom, the United States, the High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, and Iran reached a comprehensive solution to the Iranian nuclear issue, a Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) on Iran's nuclear programme. The agreement provided for substantial limits on Iran's nuclear programme and for the removal of all sanctions. It also provided assurances that Iran's nuclear activities remained exclusively peaceful.[27]

On 20 July 2015, the Security Council unanimously adopted resolution 2231 (2015) endorsing the 14 July agreement. The Council requested the IAEA to verify and monitor Iran's compliance. The Council would terminate sanctions adopted between 2006 and 2015 upon receipt of a positive report from the Agency. The resolution provisions would expire 10 years after its adoption.[28]

The Security Council members welcomed the agreement as a triumph of diplomacy and cooperation over confrontation and mistrust. The United States maintained that the agreement would reduce the number of Iran's centrifuges by two thirds and eliminate 98% of its enriched uranium. Iran described resolution 2231 (2015) as a fundamental shift in the Council's 10-year consideration of Iran's peaceful nuclear programme.[29]

On 15 December 2015, the IAEA closed its dossier on Iran. There were no signs of undeclared nuclear material or activities in Iran, and the Agency and Iran had fully implemented the July road map, clarifying matters pertaining to the nuclear programme. The JCPOA reached its Implementation Day on 16 January 2016, reflecting the good-faith effort by all parties to fulfil their agreed commitments. The United States

[26] DPB, 23 February 2015; DPB, 25 February 2015; DPB, 4 March 2015.

[27] SC/11974, 7488th Meeting (AM), 20 July 2015; SG/SM/16642, 2 April 2015.

[28] SC/11974, 7488th Meeting (AM), 20 July 2015. The resolution 2231 (2015) and its annexes exceeds 100 pages, underlining the complexity of the issue. Ibid.

[29] SC/11974, 7488th Meeting (AM), 20 July 2015.

and Iran reached an agreement to release detainees held by the United States and Iran. The United States and several other countries lifted their sanctions on Iran.[30]

In July 2016, one year after the adoption of the JCPOA, the Security Council reviewed progress on its implementation. The Secretary-General reported that all parties stayed the course and worked through challenges in a spirit of cooperation and compromise. The Plan had potential to reinforce global non-proliferation norms and assure the exclusively peaceful nature of Iran's nuclear programme. The United States welcomed Iran's swift implementation of the deal and confirmed that the deal had held.[31]

The JCPOA agreed by Iran, the P5+1 (China, France, Russia, the United Kingdom, the United States and Germany) and the High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy on 14 July 2015, and Security Council resolution 2231 (2015) of 20 July 2015 were historic steps towards resolving a long-standing international issue through dialogue.[32]

The agreement ended one of the Security Council's strictest sanctions regimes and provided Iran with the opportunity for greater engagement with the international community. US President Barack Obama claimed that this deal basically avoided a war with Iran. The UN Secretary-General very strongly supported this agreement, believing it would be a positive development in the relations between countries within the region.[33]

The Action Plan needed to be fully implemented and its signatories to do their utmost to sustain diplomatic cooperation to strengthen the international non-proliferation regime. Bearing in mind the fact that resolution 2231 (2015) would be in place until October 2025, the Plan was only taking its first steps in a long process.[34]

[30]SC/12163, 7583rd Meeting (PM), 15 December 2015; SG/SM/17466-DC/3601, 16 January 2016; SG/SM/17467, 16 January 2016.

[31]SC/12450, 7739th Meeting (AM), 18 July 2016. For the Secretary-General's report, see UN document S/2016/589, 12 July 2016.

[32]SC/12044, 7522nd Meeting (PM), 15 September 2015.

[33]SG/SM/17939-SC/12452, 20 July 2016; DBP, 16 July 2015.

[34]SC/12450, 7739th Meeting (AM), 18 July 2016.

The historic agreement between the P5+1 (China, France, Russian Federation, United Kingdom, United States, Germany) and Iran on a JCPOA was a significant achievement. The agreement reflected the good-faith effort by all parties and demonstrated that international proliferation concerns could be addressed through dialogue and patient diplomacy. UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon commended all parties for making a very good agreement, that provided for the eventual removal of all nuclear-related sanctions against Iran. The Secretary-General hoped this agreement would contribute to greater regional and international cooperation for peace, security and stability in the region and beyond. It was also hoped that its success could inspire and reinject momentum in the search for peace in the Middle East, an area that has been at the centre of United Nations diplomacy since the end of the Second World War.[35]

[35] SG/SM/16954-SC/11975, 20 July 2015; SG/SM/17420, 16 December 2015.

Check for updates

CHAPTER 15

The Middle East Peace Process: A Can Is Kicked Down an Endless Road

> The *status quo* entrenches a one-State reality of perpetual occupation and conflict. We must not give up on the right of Palestine to exist, just as we must protect the right of Israel to exist in peace and security with its neighbours.
>
> UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon[1]

When he became Secretary-General in January 2007, Ban Ki-moon pledged to re-inject momentum in the search for peace in the Middle East. As the developments of 2006 had taken the international community further from the goal of two States, Israel and Palestine, Ban Ki-moon promised to reverse that trend.[2]

The situation in the region remained delicate. In May, the factional fighting erupted in Gaza, pitting Hamas against Palestinian Authority and Fatah. Rocket fire against Israel escalated and Israeli tanks entered the Gaza Strip for the first time since the ceasefire in November 2006.[3]

On 16 July 2007, US President George W. Bush announced renewed US commitment to a negotiated two-State solution. The announcement created diplomatic momentum and on 27 November 2007 in Annapolis, Maryland, President Mahmoud Abbas and Prime Minister Ehud Olmert agreed to launch negotiations in order to conclude a peace treaty

[1] SG/SM/18372-SC/12633-PAL/2211, 16 December 2016.

[2] GA/PAL/1038, 299th Meeting (PM), 27 February 2007.

[3] SC/9025, 5683rd Meeting (AM), 24 May 2007.

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M. Jesenský, *The United Nations under Ban Ki-moon*,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-12220-1_15

resolving all outstanding issues. Ban Ki-moon, invited to Annapolis, welcomed a new beginning of the Middle East peace process and urged the abandonment of piecemeal approaches and to address all of the issues: Jerusalem, refugees, borders, settlements, security and water. The most intensive political dialogue on the Middle East in years had commenced.[4]

The gap between the aspirations of the political process and the grim realities of the situation on the ground was exposed by the escalation of violence in Gaza, southern Israel and the West Bank in January 2008. The Annapolis process had come to a standstill and was at risk of collapse. Although the ongoing Israeli–Palestinian negotiations continued, it was imperative for the political talks to produce tangible results. However, negotiations had produced no results, nothing had been approved and nothing in writing.[5]

In November 2008, UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon observed that a peace treaty by the end of the year appeared unlikely. President Bush convened the Annapolis Conference, the first major peace conference in 16 years, to bring an end to the conflict and to reach a peace treaty by the end of 2008. The negotiations had failed to achieve major breakthroughs within the set timetable. Regardless of the disappointment stemming from the unfulfilled promise of President Bush, the Security Council adopted resolution 1850 (2008), the first resolution on the Israeli–Palestinian crisis after five years. The Council called on the parties, regional and other States, and international organizations, to intensify their efforts to achieve a two-State solution to the Israeli–Palestinian conflict. With the adoption of resolution 1850 (2008) on 16 December 2008, the international community sent a clear message that negotiations towards that outcome were irreversible.[6]

[4]SC/9085, 5723rd Meeting (AM), 25 July 2007; SC/9108, 5736th Meeting, 29 August 2007; SC/9155, 5767th Meeting, 24 October 2007; SG/SM/11301-OBV/670-PAL/2091, 28 November 2007; SC/9214, 5815th Meeting, 21 December 2007.

[5]SC/9235, 5827th Meeting (AM), 30 January 2008; SC/9283, 5859th Meeting (AM & PM), 25 March 2008; SC/9402, 5940th Meeting (AM & PM), 22 July 2008; SC/9457, 5983rd Meeting (AM), 26 September 2008.

[6]SC/9539, 6045th Meeting (AM), 16 December 2008; SG/SM/11946-OBV/749-PAL/2103, 21 November 2008; SC/9539, 6045th Meeting (AM), 16 December 2008; Press Conference by Head of Organization of Islamic Conference, 22 September 2008; SC/9539, 6045th Meeting (AM), 16 December 2008; SC/9544, 6049th Meeting (AM & PM), 18 December 2008.

In December 2008 violence escalated again in and around Gaza. The fighting began on 27 December, when Israel launched a major offensive in Gaza—"Operation Cast Lead"—in response to Hamas rocket attacks. Three schools of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), set up by the United Nations as places of refuge for civilians, had been hit.[7]

Concerned by the deepening humanitarian crisis in the Gaza Strip and the resulting heavy civilian casualties, the Security Council adopted resolution 1860 (2009), with the US abstention, calling for an immediate ceasefire, leading to the full withdrawal of Israeli forces from Gaza. Ban Ki-moon left for the region to step up the pace of diplomatic efforts to stop fighting. The Israeli military bombed the UNRWA headquarters in Gaza, while the Secretary-General was on an official visit to Israel. Although the Security Council was still seized by the issue, the General Assembly resumed its emergency special session at the request of the 118 Member States of the Non-Aligned Movement. The decision stimulated debate as to whether or not the Security Council failed to exercise its primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security.[8]

Barack Obama, President of the United States, came to office at a time when many viewed the United States with mistrust. He engaged immediately with the Middle East peace process, unlike his predecessor, who had only started engaging towards the end of his term.[9]

In Cairo on 4 June 2009, Obama reiterated his commitment to the creation of a Palestinian State and the resolution of the Arab–Israeli conflict. On 14 June, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu stated that the Israeli Government would accept a Palestinian State, but under stringent conditions related to territory, security, refugees, Jerusalem

[7] SC/9563, 6061st Meeting (PM), 6 January 2009.

[8] SC/9567, 6063rd Meeting (Night), 8 January 2009; SG/SM/12044, 12 January 2009; GA/10807, Tenth Emergency Special Session, 32nd & 33rd Meetings (AM & PM), 15 January 2009. After the crisis, Ban Ki-moon established the UN Board of Inquiry to review incidents in the Gaza Strip between 27 December 2008 and 19 January 2009 causing death, injuries or damage at or to United Nations premises. Later on, the Government of Israel made a payment of $10.5 million to the UN in respect of losses sustained in the nine incidents investigated by the Gaza Board of Inquiry. SG/SM/12092, 10 February 2009; SC/9854, Security Council 6265th Meeting (AM & PM), 27 January 2010.

[9] GA/10860, 23 September 2009; Press Conference by League of Arab States Secretary-General, 29 May 2009.

and the character of the State of Israel. Moreover, the Quartet (United Nations, Russian Federation, United States and European Union), meeting in Trieste on 26 June 2009, affirmed its determination to actively and vigorously seek a comprehensive resolution of the Arab–Israeli conflict, on the basis of United Nations Security Council resolutions 242, 338, 1397, 1515, 1850, the Madrid principles including land for peace, the Road Map, and the agreements previously reached between the parties. The Quartet urged the Government of Israel to freeze all settlement activity and called on all Palestinians to commit themselves to recognition of Israel.[10]

In September 2009, at the UN General Assembly, Obama said the time had come to relaunch negotiations—without preconditions—to address the permanent status issues. In view of the US Administration taking a stronger lead, there were glimpses of hope regarding the Palestinian–Israeli issue. At the same time, there were concerns that to negotiate while Israel continued to build settlements, thus changing the demographic and geographic character of the Occupied Palestinian Territory, meant such negotiations would end in failure. To address these concerns, on 26 November, Netanyahu announced a 10-month freeze on new construction permits. However, construction already underway would continue and the restraint did not apply to activity in the Israeli-determined municipal boundaries of East Jerusalem.[11]

In 2010, the international community intensified efforts to revive Israeli–Palestinian negotiations. On 17 March 2010, the Quartet had set out a two-year schedule for the conclusion of the negotiations.[12]

The explosiveness of the situation was exposed on 31 May, when Israeli naval forces boarded a six-ship aid convoy heading towards Gaza. The convoy was to deliver humanitarian aid to Gaza and to break the Israeli blockade on Gaza. There had been serious violence on the main passenger vessel, a Turkish-registered ship named Mavi Marmara, with casualties among the passengers and Israeli military personnel injured.

[10]SC/9691, 6150th Meeting (PM), 23 June 2009; Statement by Middle East Quartet, SG/2152, 26 June 2009.

[11]GA/10860, 23 September 2009; Press Conference by Head of UNRRWA, 18 September 2009; Press Conference by Secretary-General of League of Arab States (Amr Moussa), 25 September 2009; SC/9826, 6248th Meeting (AM), 17 December 2009.

[12]SC/9906, 6298th Meeting (AM & PM), 14 April 2010.

The Security Council expressed deep regret at the loss of life and injuries resulting from the use of force during the Israeli military operation. The Secretary-General condemned the violence and called for a full investigation. Some countries urged a lifting of the unsustainable and illegal Gaza blockade. Israel maintained that a state of armed conflict existed between Israel and Hamas; therefore, a maritime blockade was a legitimate and recognized measure under international law that could be implemented as part of an armed conflict at sea.[13]

In August 2010, the Middle East Quartet invited the Israeli and Palestinian sides to begin direct negotiations in Washington, DC, in September to resolve all final status issues and reach an agreement in one year. The peace talks opened in Washington, but neither the Secretary-General, nor the Deputy Secretary-General—as a matter of fact, neither the UN nor any other Quartet members—had been invited to the opening of the talks.[14]

The year 2011 represented a critical crossroads for the peace process. By September, there needed to be a substantial breakthrough on the political track for several reasons. First, the Palestinian Authority was set to complete its two-year plan for Palestinian state-building by August. Second, the Quartet-agreed time frame of the Palestinian–Israeli negotiations for reaching a framework agreement on permanent status would end by September. As a consequence, clearly at stake were the viability of the political process, the Quartet's very credibility and in fact, President Obama's own credibility.[15]

The Quartet, meeting in Munich, Germany, on 5 February 2011, reaffirmed that negotiations should conclude by September and lead to an outcome that would end the occupation that began in 1967 and resolve all permanent status issues in order to end the conflict and achieve a two-State solution. At the same time, the Quartet regretted the discontinuation of Israel's 10-month moratorium on settlement activity and reaffirmed that unilateral actions would not be recognized by the international community.[16]

[13]SC/9940, 6325th & 6326th Meetings (PM & Night), 31 May 2010.

[14]SG/2161, Statement by Middle East Quartet, 20 August 2010; DPB, 1 September 2010.

[15]SC/10157, 6470th Meeting (AM & PM), 19 January 2011.

[16]SG/2168, Statement by Middle East Quartet, 7 February 2011.

The Security Council failed to adopt a resolution demanding that all settlement activity cease immediately. The draft resolution, sponsored by 135 countries, was rejected following a veto cast by the United States. The US Ambassador explained that the United States agreed with the wider world about the folly and illegitimacy of continued settlement activity but found it unwise for the Council to attempt to resolve the core issue.[17]

In the spring of 2011, the wind of change was sweeping in the Middle East, from Tunisia and Egypt to Bahrain, Yemen and beyond. In stark contrast to these dramatic political transformations, known as the Arab Spring or the Arab Awakening, Israeli–Palestinian negotiations remained at a standstill. The parties were unable to overcome the deficit of trust without credible and effective international intervention.[18]

On 13 April 2011, the World Bank, International Monetary Fund and the United Nations reported that the Palestinian Authority had crossed the threshold for a functioning State in terms of its institution building. On 19 May 2011, US President Barrack Obama welcomed the historic developments taking place in the Middle East and North Africa. He outlined the vision of Israeli–Palestinian peace and offered important ideas to help the peace talks move forward. Obama had already expressed the wish to welcome the new country of Palestine among UN General Assembly Member States in September.[19]

The Quartet expressed support to Obama's vision of peace, but it fell short in translating the parameters on borders and security, as presented by Obama, into an internationally agreed framework for the parties to resume negotiations. The Quartet's inability to endorse the parameters for negotiations and South Sudan's rapid accession to UN membership added to the legitimacy of the Palestinian intention to ask the United Nations to recognize a Palestinian State.[20]

[17]SC/10178, 6484th Meeting (PM), 18 February 2011.

[18]SC/10182, 6488th Meeting (AM), 24 February 2011; SG/SM/13464, 21 March 2011.

[19]GA/PAL/1195, 19 April 2011; GA/PAL/1197, 28 April 2011; SG/SM/13582, 19 May 2011; SG/2174, Statement by Middle East Quartet, 20 May 2011.

[20]SC/10340, 6590th Meeting (AM & PM), 26 July 2011. Riyad Mansour, Permanent Observer for Palestine, observed that South Sudan had "marched to United Nations membership in five days." GA/PAL/1208, Committee on the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, 334th Meeting (AM), 27 July 2011.

As a result, on 23 September 2011, Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas submitted the application of Palestine for admission to United Nations membership to the Security Council. Simultaneously, the Quartet called for talks between Israel and the Palestinians to recommence without preconditions and proposed that the objective of any negotiation would be to reach an agreement within a time frame agreed to by the parties, but to be not longer than the end of 2012. Israel maintained that settlements were not the core cause of the Israeli–Palestinian conflict, the primary obstacle to peace was the Arab world's refusal to acknowledge the Jewish people's ancient connection to the land of Israel and the Palestinian insistence on the right of return.[21]

The Security Council Admission Committee had been unable to make a unanimous recommendation to the Security Council on Palestine's application. However, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) General Conference voted to admit Palestine as a Member State on 31 October 2011. Subsequently, the United States and Israel announced cutting or freezing their funding to UNESCO.[22]

After 15 months of absence of direct talks, Israeli and Palestinian negotiators had started meeting on 3 January 2012 in Amman, Jordan. Some countries voiced limited expectations for the resumption of the peace process and stressed that the will of parties was essential, but only an international follow-up mechanism could create the necessary dynamics for progress towards the two-State solution. In February 2012, the Secretary-General travelled to Gaza and Israel. Ban Ki-moon faced the frustrations of the Palestinians in Gaza where his car was pelted with stones. At the Herzliya Conference in Israel, Ban Ki-moon, speaking as a true friend of Israel, argued that the highest priority must be to return to negotiations—not merely procedural talks, but genuine and substantive negotiations to resolve the core issues. He stressed that the creation of functioning and well-governed Palestinian institutions was clearly a strategic Israeli interest. In his view, time was running out and the world was ready to help ensure Israel's security, just as it was ready to help Palestinians to establish a new nation.[23]

[21]SG/2178, Statement by Middle East Quartet, 23 September 2011; SC/10420, 6636th Meeting (AM & PM), 24 October 2011.

[22]SG/SM/13918, 2 November 2011; GA/PAL/1212, 18 November 2011.

[23]SC/10527, 6706th Meeting (AM & PM), 24 January 2012; DPB, 2 February; SG/SM/14090-PAL/2150, 2 February 2012; SG/SM/14097, 7 February 2012.

However, momentum towards the two-State solution appeared to have dissipated. On 17 September 2012, the UN Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, Robert Serry, briefing the Security Council, noted that yet another deadline set by the diplomatic Quartet on the Middle East peace process for reaching a settlement would lapse by year's end. On 29 November 2012, the General Assembly accorded Palestine non-Member Observer State status in the United Nations, by a vote of 138 in favour to 9 against with 41 abstentions. Ambassador Prosor of Israel argued there was only one route to Palestinian statehood and that route did not run through the General Assembly chamber in New York, but through direct negotiations. The representative of the United States explained that only through direct negotiations could the parties achieve the peace that they both deserved, and the resolution placed further obstacles in the path to peace; therefore, the United States had voted against it. The representative of France explained that by voting to recognize Palestine as a non-Member Observer State, France had voted in favour of a two-State solution, Israel and Palestine, living side by side in peace and security, within secure, internationally recognized borders. The representative of Switzerland said that his delegation's decision to vote in favour of the resolution had been motivated by the desire to unblock the stalemate and to relaunch the peace process.[24]

A window of opportunity for renewed international engagement opened following the visit of President Obama to the Middle East in March 2013. The re-engagement by the United States represented the first real opportunity since October 2010 to reach a final status agreement. Israeli–Palestinian direct talks resumed on 29 July 2013, with senior negotiators from both sides meeting in Washington, DC. The Middle East Quartet welcomed the announcement by Secretary of State John Kerry that the United States-brokered direct talks would focus on all core final status issues, such as borders, security, refugees and Jerusalem, and work towards a comprehensive agreement within nine months. President Barack Obama stated in an address to the General Assembly

[24]GA/PAL/1246, 8 October 2012; GA/11317, Sixty-seventh General Assembly, 44th & 45th Meetings (PM & Night), 29 November 2012. The following countries voted against the resolution: Canada, the Czech Republic, Israel, Marshall Islands, Micronesia, Nauru, Panama, Palau and the United States. Ibid.

that his country was determined to resolve the Israeli–Palestinian conflict. The General Assembly proclaimed 2014 the International Year of Solidarity with the Palestinian People.[25]

While 2013 had tested the international community's commitment to breaking the deadlock between Israel and the Palestinians, 2014 seemed to be a moment of truth regarding a two-State solution. The Secretary-General viewed 2014 as a critical year for achieving the two-State solution. Deputy Secretary-General Jan Eliasson noted that parameters for an agreement had long been clear, as laid out in UN Security Council resolutions, the Madrid principles, the road map, the 2002 Arab Peace initiative and existing agreements between the parties. What was needed was political will and courage, as well as recognition of historic responsibility. The essence of the UN's vision of the two-State solution meant a settlement that would end the occupation that started in 1967 and which would end the conflict. It meant securing an independent, viable and sovereign State of Palestine living alongside a secure State of Israel. It meant accepting Jerusalem as the capital of the two States, with arrangements for Holy Sites acceptable to all. And it meant a just solution for millions of Palestinian refugees around the region.[26]

The Secretary-General warned that the failure of political progress could fuel a downward spiral on the ground. He was alarmed by recurrent violence and incitement from all sides, as well as continued settlement activity which is illegal under international law. Ban Ki-moon urged both parties to act responsibly and with restraint. He warned that the ongoing initiative was possibly the last attempt to salvage the two-State solution.[27]

The United States-brokered talks faltered in the spring of 2014 due to the inability of the parties to bridge the gaps in their substantive positions. On 28 March, the Israeli Cabinet postponed its decision to follow

[25] SC/10957, 6940th Meeting (AM), 25 March 2013; SG/SM/14993-GA/PAL/1266, 29 April 2013; GA/PAL/1271, 18 June 2013; SG/2196, Statement by Middle East Quartet, 30 July 2013; SC/11100, 7020th Meeting (AM), 20 August 2013; GA/PAL/1277, 4 October 2013; GA/11460, Sixty-eighth General Assembly Plenary, 58th Meeting (AM), 26 November 2013.

[26] SC/11216, 7084th Meeting (PM), 16 December 2013; SG/SM/15585-OBV/1294-PAL/2170, 16 January 2014; DSG/SM/737-GA/PAL/1285, Deputy Secretary-General Jan Eliasson, 16 January 2014.

[27] SG/SM/15595-SC/11253, 20 January 2014.

through with the release of the fourth and last tranche of pre-Oslo prisoners. The Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), interpreting this decision as a breach of the quiet understanding, proceeded on 1 April to submit accession instruments to 15 international treaties and conventions. On 23 April, rival Palestinian factions Fatah and Hamas reached a unity agreement on a National Consensus Government. Following that announcement, Israel decided to suspend the talks.[28]

The negotiations led by the United States that started in July 2013 had set the nine-month time frame expiring on 29 April 2014. Their goal was a comprehensive peace agreement on all final status issues. Few days before the deadline, Ban Ki-moon had to admit that, given the complexity of the issues, nine months had proved to be insufficient time to complete the task.[29]

In summer 2014, once again, violence spiralled out of control in Gaza, Israel and the West Bank. The lead-up to the tensions included the murders of three Israeli students and a Palestinian teenager, which were widely condemned by the United Nations and the international community. At an emergency Security Council meeting, Ambassador Roet of Israel explained that his country was fighting to rid Gaza of 10,000 rockets that Hamas had built up over the years. The Secretary-General noted that Israel had legitimate security concerns, condemning the indiscriminate rocket fire from Gaza, but he was alarmed at Israel's heavy response. Although a ceasefire was critical in ending the escalating violence, if the root causes of the Israeli–Palestinian conflict were not addressed, the problem would never be solved, but merely delayed for yet another time. Ambassador Araud of France agreed that Israel had a right to protect itself, but the staggering loss of civilian life represented an excessive use of force. It was time to conclude that Israelis and Palestinians could not achieve peace by themselves; the international community had to change the context that was dominated by fear and hatred.[30]

The absence of a credible political horizon in an extremely challenging and volatile situation had severe consequences. Large neighbourhoods in Gaza lay in total ruin, leaving 100,000 homeless. More than 2100 Palestinians had been killed, including 11 staff of the UNRWA. On the

[28] SC/11373, 7164th Meeting (AM), 29 April 2014.

[29] SG/SM/15791-GA/PAL/1292, 24 April 2014.

[30] SC/11467, 7214th Meeting (AM), 10 July 2014; SC/11482, 7220th Meeting (PM), 18 July 2014; SC/11485, 7222nd Meeting (AM), 22 July 2014.

Israeli side, 66 soldiers and six civilians, had been killed. The Secretary-General established an internal and independent UN Headquarters Board of Inquiry into certain incidents that occurred in the Gaza Strip between 8 July and 26 August 2014.[31]

To address a lack of a credible political horizon, Jordan presented at the Security Council the Palestinian initiative for a Council resolution to set a timeframe for a comprehensive, peaceful solution to the Israeli–Palestinian conflict, and a call for Israel's full withdrawal from all Palestinian territory occupied since 1967. On 30 December 2014, the Security Council failed to adopt a draft resolution calling for Israel, within three years, to withdraw from Palestinian territory occupied since 1967 and, within one year, for the parties to reach a negotiated solution to the conflict. US Ambassador Power stated that the draft was not a constructive step and included deadlines that did not take into account Israel's security needs. Ambassador Delattre of France argued that the Council could and had to set a clear timetable for negotiations, as that was essential to credible discussions. Council President, Ambassador Zene Cherif of Chad, regretted the rejection of the balanced and moderate text, which would have allowed the Council to finally put an end to interminable negotiations and to resolve the Israeli–Palestinian conflict. The Council had once more missed a date with history.[32]

The General Assembly designated 2014 the International Year of Solidarity with the Palestinian People to catalyse global action in the then promising context of direct peace negotiations brokered by the United States. Instead, talks broke down and violence escalated and 2014 witnessed the highest civilian death toll for Palestinians since 1967.[33]

While achieving a two-State solution through negotiations remained the best way of bolstering peace and security throughout the region, calls continued for a framework for negotiations. Some claimed that it

[31] SC/11563, 7266th Meeting (AM), 16 September 2014.

[32] SC/11607, 7281st Meeting (AM), 21 October 2014; SC/11722, 7354th Meeting (PM), 30 December 2014. The draft drew the support of just eight countries—Argentina, Chad, Chile, China, France, Jordan, Luxembourg, Russia—shy of the 9 required for its adoption. Five Council members had abstained in the vote—the United Kingdom, Nigeria, Republic of Korea, Rwanda and Lithuania, while two opposed it—the United States and Australia. Ibid.

[33] DSG/SM/842-GA/PAL/1325, 10 February 2015; DPB, 26 March 2015.

was an illusion that progress could occur without wide international support and encouragement to the parties to commit to the compromises needed. Worse, there were worries there could not be a Palestinian State or peace in the Middle East without strengthened international commitment. The departing UN Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process warned it might already be too late to realize the paradigm of two States for two peoples. Robert Serry noted that during his tenure, the Council had passed only two resolutions on the matter, neither of which had offered a strategy. "Hasn't the time come, Mr. President, for the Council to lead?" he asked.[34]

In the fall of 2015, amidst heated debates about the political value of symbolic gestures, the General Assembly adopted the resolution deciding that the flags of non-member Observer States would be raised at UN Headquarters and United Nations offices following the flags of the Members States of the Organization. The Assembly adopted the resolution by a recorded vote of 119 in favour to 8 against, with 45 abstentions. Speaking after the vote, Israel's representative cautioned that no vote could turn an empty symbolic gesture into a State. France observed that the vote was symbolic, but symbols were important in politics.[35]

In October 2015, the Israeli–Palestinian conflict, once again, entered a dangerous phase. The Deputy Secretary-General, Jan Eliasson, condemned the appalling wave of knife attacks, shootings and all attacks against Israelis and Palestinians alike. The eruption of violence gripped the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem, as well as Israel and Gaza. Eliasson ventured to suggest that the crisis would not have erupted if the Palestinian people had a perspective of hope towards a viable Palestinian State. At the same time, Israelis saw growing attempts in the international community at what they believed had aimed at delegitimization of their state. Taken together, the failed peace initiatives and the reluctance of leaders on both sides to take the bold steps necessary to make progress created a highly combustible reality. A reality in which Israel's security concerns remained unmet and the Palestinian national

[34]SC/11836, 7417th Meeting (AM), 26 March 2015; SC/11868, 7430th Meeting (AM), 21 April 2015; SC/11980, 7490th Meeting (AM), 23 July 2015.

[35]GA/11676, Sixty-ninth General Assembly, 102nd Meeting (PM), 10 September 2015. The following States voted against: Australia, Canada, Israel, Marshall Islands, Micronesia, Palau, Tuvalu and the United States. Ibid.

struggle risked taking on an ever more violent dimension; and this in a region already wracked by violent, religious extremism.[36]

Opening the Security Council's quarterly debate on the Middle East, the Secretary-General of the United Nations observed that 2016 had begun much like 2015 had ended, with violence and a polarized public discourse across the spectrum in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territory. Palestinian frustration was growing under the weight of a half-century of occupation and a paralysed peace process. Noting that settlement activities raised questions about Israel's commitment to a two-State solution, he urged the Palestinian factions to advance unity on the basis of democracy and Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) principles, stressing that reconciliation was critical to reuniting the West Bank and Gaza. Ambassador Power of the United States expressed deep concern that Israel had designated some 70% of Area C as State land, observing that such designations, as well as the continued construction of new settlements, raised serious concerns about Israel's long-term intentions.[37]

A statement by the Secretary-General in the Security Council, and his earlier editorial in *The New York Times*, had provoked quite a lot of reaction. Some even accused Ban Ki-moon of justifying terrorism, but he rejected the accusations. He condemned the stabbings, vehicle attacks and shootings by Palestinians targeting Israeli civilians. But the Secretary-General asserted that the time had come for Israelis, Palestinians and the international community to see the writing on the wall: the *status quo* was untenable. In his remarks in Algiers, Algeria, in March 2016, Ban Ki-moon insisted that the world faced a simple truth: people would always resist occupation.[38]

In July 2016, the Secretary-General criticized the decision to advance plans to build new housing units in the West Bank and in occupied East Jerusalem which raised legitimate questions about Israel's long-term intentions. He reiterated that settlements were illegal under international law. The Middle East Quartet, in its July report, also emphasized its strong opposition to ongoing settlement activity, an obstacle to peace, and expressed its grave concern that the acceleration of settlement

[36] DSG/SM/910-SC/12093, 22 October 2015.

[37] SC/12219, 7610th Meeting (AM), 26 January 2016.

[38] DPB, 27 January 2017; DPB, 1 February; DPB, 8 February 2017; SG/2224, 12 February 2016; SG/SM/17577-AFR/3336, 6 March 2016.

construction and expansion in Area C and East Jerusalem, were steadily eroding the viability of the two-State solution.[39]

Ban Ki-moon was saddened to end his tenure as Secretary-General with no sense of optimism for the future on the question of Palestine. Delivering his last report on the situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question, he regretted to acknowledge a situation where the realization of the hopes and dreams of Palestinians and Israelis alike seemed more distant than ever. By the end of 2016, yet another timeline for reaching a negotiated solution would have lapsed and the window for achieving it was closing fast.[40]

During its last meeting on the situation in the Middle East in 2016, the Security Council adopted resolution 2334 (2016) by 14 votes in favour, with the United States abstaining. The Council reiterated its demand that Israel immediately and completely cease all settlement activities in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem. The Council reaffirmed that the establishment of settlements in the Palestinian territory occupied since 1967, including East Jerusalem, had no legal validity and constituted a flagrant violation under international law and a major obstacle to the achievement of the two-State solution and a just, lasting and comprehensive peace. Ambassador Delattre of France described the resolution as an important and historic event, noting that it marked the first time that the Council had clearly stated the obvious: settlement activities undermined a two-State solution. US Ambassador Power recalled President Ronald Reagan's words in 1982 highlighting that settlements undermined Israel's security and eroded prospects for peace and stability. The Secretary-General welcomed the adoption by the Security Council of resolution 2334 (2016) as a significant step, demonstrating the Council's much-needed leadership.[41]

The Israeli–Palestinian conflict was not just one of many conflicts in the region and the world. The decade of 2007–2016 saw achievements, but also missed opportunities. In many ways, from the UN perspective, the decade could be described as a lost decade for Israeli–Palestinian

[39] SG/SM/17907, 5 July 2016; SG/2232, 23 September 2016.

[40] SC/12632, 7839th Meeting (AM), 16 December 2016; SG/SM/18090, 19 September 2016.

[41] SC/12657, 7853rd Meeting (PM), 23 December 2016; SG/SM/18394-SC/12658, 23 December 2016.

peacemaking. The admission of Palestine to the UN as a non-member Observer State in 2012 was a historic milestone, but it would only have true significance with seeing two States, Israel and Palestine, living side by side in peace and security. Repeated attempts by the United States at reaching a final resolution failed and were eclipsed by renewed hostilities. Another troubling measure of the state of play was the reality that, during this decade, the Security Council adopted only three resolutions on the Middle East peace process. The observers of the Middle East scene suggested that left to themselves the two parties would never reach an agreement.[42]

During his ten years in office, Ban Ki-moon maintained that the international community should never accept bias against Israel within UN bodies. Israel and the UN could work together. In 2016, for the first time in history, the Permanent Representative of Israel was elected chair of one of the General Assembly's six Main Committees. At the same time, Ban Ki-moon argued, Israel had to realize that the reality in which a democratic State, governed by the rule of law, keeping the Palestinian people under military occupation would continue to generate criticism and calls for accountability.[43]

In 2006, Secretary-General Kofi Annan called for a revitalized Middle East Quartet, working closely with international and regional partners, to facilitate and sustain direct negotiations. The international community expected the Security Council to reassert a two-State solution as the only path to peace and endorse a path to negotiations through a parameters resolution. Making peace was a task for to the Israelis and Palestinians to do, but international support and pressure remained critical. As General Assembly President Peter Thomson of Fiji once observed, the United Nations had a permanent responsibility until the question was resolved in accordance with international law.[44]

Ban Ki-moon pledged to re-inject momentum in the search for peace in the Middle East but given his only a marginal impact on the process,

[42]DSG/SM/1030-GA/PAL/1380-OBV/1692, 29 November 2016; SG/SM/18372-SC/12633-PAL/2211, 16 December 2016; DPB, 22 October 2015.

[43]SG/SM/17884, 27 June 2016; SG/SM/18372-SC/12633-PAL/2211, 16 December 2016.

[44]SC/12327, 7673rd Meeting (AM & PM), 18 April 2016; SG/SM/18372-SC/12633-PAL/2211, 16 December 2016; GA/11860, Seventy-first session, 49th Meeting (PM), 29 November 2016.

he was saddened to end his tenure less optimistic for the future on the question of Palestine. In fact, he regretted to acknowledge that the realization of the hopes and dreams of Palestinians and Israelis alike seemed more distant than ever.

PART V

Conclusion

Check for updates

CHAPTER 16

Conclusion: The United Nations Matters

> This has been a decade of unceasing test. But, I have also seen collective action change millions of lives for the better. Difficult as it may sometimes be, international cooperation remains the path to a more peaceful and prosperous world. I will continue to spare no effort to appeal to world leaders, long-standing or newly minted, to recognize and embrace that preeminent twenty-first-century fact.
>
> UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon[1]

Ban Ki-moon's disappointment over the Middle East stalemate added to his frustrations over other unresolved problems. The proxy wars in Syria and Yemen showed few signs of ending, the civil strife in South Sudan, Libya and Afghanistan continued, and the implementation of the Minsk Agreements on Eastern Ukraine remained incomplete. Ban Ki-moon relinquished his post to Antonio Guterres of Portugal in late December 2016, leaving many unfulfilled issues to his successor and Member States. He explained that "all the fires were still burning," clearly, due to a lack of global solidarity. There were many people who believed that military solutions could address all these issues, but as he has been repeatedly saying, there was no such military solution.

[1]SG/SM/18377, Press Conference by Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, 16 December 2016.

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M. Jesenský, *The United Nations under Ban Ki-moon*,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-12220-1_16

Only inclusive political solutions could bring a sustainable solution to the issues. Much more could be achieved with global solidarity and compassionate leadership.

Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon would very likely be remembered for being a champion on climate change and for spearheading the adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals, two deeply interconnected issues that could not be addressed effectively unless the world came together. As development gains could not be sustained without reducing climate risks, addressing one without the other made no sense. Climate change and sustainable development were two sides of the same coin. Development could not be sustainable if it did not address the challenge of climate change.

The global challenges of building a more equitable, healthier and more secure world for all represented an ambitious and extensive agenda of the United Nations' Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), adopted in 2000. Amid growing awareness of the implications of global warming, Ban Ki-moon challenged the world leaders to act on the interlinked issues of energy, climate change, air pollution and industrial development. The Secretary-General had stated that climate change and sustainable development were his priorities, and he had confirmed his intention to continue to take leadership on these issues and to help to generate required political will. His convening of high-level meetings, thematic debates and taking the issues at the highest political levels helped to galvanize political will and catalyse joint action. Climate change and development—long on the international agenda—received the very highest attention that it merited. Ban Ki-moon wanted to ensure that the UN played its role to the full. Indeed, he believes this was just the kind of global challenge that the UN was best suited to address. The United Nations marked its seventieth anniversary in 2015 by seeing landmark steps to advance sustainable development and climate change.

In many ways, the stars were aligned as never before. The world's biggest players—China, the European Union, Russia and the United States—demonstrated unprecedented leadership. Despite many global divisions, world leaders united to adopt the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development with 17 goals to end poverty and build peaceful societies. The Paris Agreement on climate change became a triumph for multilateralism. On 22 April 2016, 175 countries signed the Paris Agreement in New York. Never before have so many countries signed an international agreement in one day. Ban Ki-moon's mobilizing efforts in

promoting international cooperation on MDGs and the Climate Change was possibly the most important of his endeavours showing the United Nations delivering results the world needed.

When the outbreak of Ebola in West Africa in 2014 exposed the links between globalization, environment, social and economic development, the Secretary-General and the United Nations came to play again an important mobilizing role. The Ebola crisis was multidimensional, with serious effects not only on public health but also on food security, on social cohesion, on economic and political stability. This was more than a health crisis; it was growingly a humanitarian, developmental and security crisis. The whole UN System was mobilized for action.

Amid a rising death toll and an exponential infection curve, and, above all, uncertainty and mounting fear, the Organization faced a fundamental test of a collective strength and will. The United Nations successfully, although some observers claimed too slowly, mobilized. The Organization's convening power, political leverage and global reach brought together technical expertise from Member States, governmental and non-governmental organizations, as well as from affected countries. The General Assembly created the first-ever United Nations emergency health mission and coordinated a unified response. Ban Ki-moon admitted that there was much to learn from this experience in dealing with outbreaks and emergencies with health consequences. The crisis had exposed gaps in national and international systems to prevent and respond to health crises. The end of Ebola transmission in West Africa was testament to what the international community can achieve when multilateralism works as it should, bringing the international community to work alongside national Governments in caring for their people. The end of the transmission of Ebola in West Africa gave hope that the world could overcome global divisions in the name of the common good.

In global challenges of sustainable development, climate change and Ebola, Ban Ki-moon could be given high marks for his performance. He assumed global leadership on par with his predecessors Boutros Boutros-Ghali and Kofi Annan during the 1992–1995 megaconferences and the Millennium and the 2005 summits.

Ebola dramatically turned global focus on Africa and its problems and reminded the international community of its mixed record in Africa, where Ban Ki-moon inherited two large regional challenges in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and Sudan. The Secretary-General chose the DRC for his first official visit to Africa. The country

was the natural, yet still developing, pole of stability in the troubled region of Central Africa.

The DRC, as large as Western Europe, was slowly moving in the right direction. The United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC) had 17,000 troops in a country of 2.4 million square kilometres. The Congolese people had very high expectations of peacekeepers, MONUC was the only organized force in the DRC, a measure of the international community's concern for the country. The Secretary-General commended MONUC troops and staff for professionally carrying out their duties under extremely difficult circumstances.

In 2013, the Secretary-General signed the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the DRC and the Region to end years of fighting and acted as one of its co-guarantors. Ban Ki-moon also inaugurated the United Nations Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) and called on the Security Council to create a special intervention brigade within MONUSCO, with peace-enforcement authorization beyond the traditional UN peacekeeping, to disarm Congolese rebels. Although Ban Ki-moon chose the country for his first African visit, he maintained relatively low profile in the Congolese affairs. If the primary measure of his performance was successful political transformation, the UN and Ban Ki-moon passed the test.

When Ban Ki-moon took over as Secretary-General, achieving peace in Darfur was among his top priorities. In Sudan, the Secretary-General and the UN scored a major peacemaking success. Following the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) between the north and the south of Sudan, and a successful referendum, made possible by UN peacekeeping and diplomacy, the United Nations has welcomed its 193rd Member State, South Sudan.

The UN-African Union Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID) with 26,000 multinational peacekeepers, jointly run by the United Nations and the African Union, marked a new era in UN-AU cooperation in the largest country in Africa. The request by the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court (ICC) for an arrest warrant against President Omer Al-Bashir of Sudan had potential to derail the peace process. UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon recognized the authority of the ICC as an independent judicial institution, but in this specific case,

Ban Ki-moon pragmatically did not specifically ask President Al-Bashir to surrender himself.

Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon made Darfur and Sudan one of his top priorities. Unfortunately, even with the independence of South Sudan, the quest for peace in Sudan was not over. South Sudan's leaders engaged in a military escalation. Ban Ki-moon called for an arms embargo on South Sudan to diminish the capacity of all sides to wage war. But the Security Council voted against it and its majority called for an inclusive national dialogue instead. South Sudan, a mixed picture of progress, needed to work with all stakeholders in restoring peace and stability to the country.

Much of Ban Ki-moon's work in Afghanistan and Iraq has been characterized by his advocacy for keeping the United Nations engaged. The Secretary-General and the United Nations were not major actors in the decisions to go to war. Following the interventions, the UN and its Secretary-General were invited into precarious and volatile situations.

The United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) continued to implement its mandate under extremely difficult circumstances. Afghanistan was in a protracted political crisis. The country made significant strides, with almost all United Nations Member States having been involved in some way in its reconstruction since the overthrow of the Taliban in 2001. Yet, Afghanistan continued to face threats from violent extremism and terrorism, insurgency had proven to be more resilient than expected. The need to resolve the conflict in the country was underscored by the appalling human cost borne by ordinary Afghans, with recorded rising numbers of civilian deaths and injuries since 2008.

The high-level meetings between the Secretary-General and President of Afghanistan, and the regular Security Council's meetings, were indications of the international community's ongoing support to ensure Afghanistan's successful transition from war and conflict to peace and stability. The Secretary-General called for military operations and political dialogue and political solutions to be harmoniously balanced. Thus, while the military campaign remained the centrepiece of efforts to defeat terrorists and consolidate security, the Government accorded greater attention to political outreach and national reconciliation. The United States and the international community supported the Afghan-led peace process and called on the Taliban to join an Afghan political process.

The Secretary-General supported active participation by regional and global partners in Iraq's stabilization. Although progress had been made on the political and economic fronts, overall violence and the resulting instability continued. Ban Ki-moon emphasized the importance of working within the framework of a United Nations strategy and of transferring responsibility to Iraqi authorities.

The United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) operated in Iraq beset by violence and political stalemate. The international community became a spectator to the political impasse and sectarian violence in the country. The perpetrators of violence were taking advantage of two leading factors of instability, namely the ongoing political stalemate within Iraq and the conflict in neighbouring Syria. In fact, a terrorist attack on the Iraqi Prime Minister's office went off where the Secretary-General participated in a joint press conference.

In 2014, Iraq and Syria faced big challenges regarding the Al-Qaida affiliated organizations, such as Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), Islamic State of Iraq and Syria(ISIS) or [Jabhat al] Nusra. The Secretary-General warned that Iraq was facing an existential threat which could be overcome through the formation of a thoroughly inclusive government. Ban Ki-moon visited Iraq amidst the growing phenomenon of foreign terrorist fighters. He maintained that the phenomenon was a consequence—not a cause—of the conflict in Syria. He appealed for measures fully in line with the goals and values and principles of the United Nations.

After the emergence of ISIL, also known as Da'esh and its horrors unleashed across Iraq, the Government of Iraq took all necessary measures to ensure that all its citizens perceived its actions to be on their behalf and in their interest. The international community not only had a vital security stake in the stability of Iraq, it also had an inescapable moral obligation to enable Iraq's Government to bring about that stability.

The "Arab Awakening" or "Arab Spring"—political and social turmoil in North Africa and the Middle East—has transformed the geopolitical landscape in Libya and Syria, where the Secretary-General dealt with the two challenging humanitarian situations. Ban Ki-moon could not make a major impact in the Syrian situation, as a result of the lack of sustained support by all major powers. He profited from rare windows of opportunity nevertheless. Ban Ki-moon was more assertive on Libya; indeed, he promoted a very controversial action, the "responsibility to protect".

In Libya, the Human Rights Council and Security Council invoked the "responsibility to protect" concept for the first time. Its application led to a split among the members of the Security Council. Some of them believed that NATO has exceeded the mandate provided by resolution 1973 (2011) and used it as a pretext for regime change. Ban Ki-moon maintained that the change of regime in Libya was done by the people, not by the intervention of any foreign forces, including the United Nations.

The Secretary-General spoke firmly and without any ambiguity when it came to Libya. He appeared less resolute in the cases of Yemen and Syria. Syria claimed the onset of violence was perpetrated by extremist groups. Ban Ki-moon maintained that the disproportionate use of force by the Syrian authorities had driven what had largely been peaceful opposition forces to resort to take up arms. He also stressed that armed extremist groups had opportunistically used the situation to carry out terrorist acts. However, Ban Ki-moon opposed further militarization of the Syrian opposition.

Tragically, the Syrian conflict deteriorated beyond all imagination. Major General Robert Mood suspended the UN Supervision Mission in Syria (UNSMIS) to monitor a cessation of armed violence and the implementation of the Annan plan. Chemical weapons were used on several occasions, including against civilians. Following the investigation mission led by Professor Åke Sellström the United Nations reached a landmark agreement on the destruction of Syria's chemical weapons programme. With a stalemate in the Security Council, Secretary-General defended the primacy of the UN Charter. Ban Ki-moon maintained that the use of force was lawful only when in exercise of self-defence in accordance with Article 51 of the Charter or when the Security Council approved such action.

The elimination of Syria's chemical weapons programme was a major achievement, but the nightmare continued. The presence of thousands of foreign terrorist fighters and groups responsible for atrocities in Syria and in Iraq has added a volatile dimension to those crises. The so-called "Islamic State" or Da'esh, became a threat to Iraq, Syria and the region.

The Secretary-General appealed to all parties to "Give peace a chance. Give diplomacy a chance."[2] But his appeals fell on deaf ears. Ban Ki-moon

[2] DPB, 28 August 2013.

also modified his views and acknowledged, for the sake of ending the tragedy, that the whole Syrian crisis and its solution should not depend upon the future of President Assad. Tragically, the divisions inside Syria, amplified by regional divisions and then mirrored in the Council, condemned Syria to its terrible fate of nearly six years of bloodshed. The crisis fuelled a refugee emergency, linking thus regional, European and global security together. Ban Ki-moon was troubled by leaving behind a legacy of the Syrian conflict. However, to pin the lack of political progress in the talks on the Secretary-General would be unfair. Ban Ki-moon has appointed some of the best diplomats who have tried to reach peace. But it was for those who had the power to set the tone to do so.

In Kosovo, Georgia and Ukraine, the Secretary-General dealt with situations and emergencies in which powerful United Nations members had an interest. Ban Ki-moon faced the dilemmas how to prevent those problems from escalating. Legally, politically and morally, Kosovo, Georgia and Ukraine formed a landscape of enormous complexity and sensitivity that required extraordinary objectivity and balance.

The Secretary-General admitted that, in his almost 40 years of diplomatic life, he has never encountered an issue as divisive, as delicate and as intractable as the Kosovo issue. Ban Ki-moon supported the Ahtisaari plan of Kosovo's independence, despite the opposition of Serbian authorities and some members of the Security Council, as the least objectionable way forward. He remained adamant that this resolution would not create any precedents for other matters. Kosovo's unilateral declaration of independence in February 2008 pushed the Secretary-General to search for a compromise among the proposals for the possible future structure and profile of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK). Several Member States supported his reconfigured and restructured UNMIK plan, other Members had serious objections to it. The quietly reconfigured UN presence managed the potentially explosive situation in Kosovo.

Some observers criticized Ban Ki-moon for taking his initiative to reconfigure UNMIK without a clear Security Council mandate or consensus. Perhaps this experience made Ban Ki-moon more cautious to take clear sides on the Georgia and Ukraine issues. If Kosovo's legal, political and moral landscape was enormously complex and sensitive, the challenges in Georgia and Ukraine were as divisive and delicate, with even larger geopolitical ramifications for Euro-Asian space.

In 2008, the international community was witnessing a grave escalation of the situation in Georgia, where the United Nations Observer Mission in Georgia (UNOMIG) and the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) peacekeeping force monitored implementation of the 1994 ceasefire agreement in Abkhazia. When the Georgian Government decided to impose its authority over South Ossetia through the use of force, the Russian Federation responded by use of force to protect its citizens and peacekeeping forces. The Secretary-General and some Member States called for an end to the use of force and the diplomatic efforts. The situation exposed the conflict between the two principles, respect for Georgia's territorial integrity and the right to self-determination of the people of South Ossetia and Abkhazia.

The Russian Federation's unilateral recognition of Georgian provinces as independent states and its subsequent veto of the UNOMIG's continuation terminated ongoing efforts to find a common solution in the crisis within the Security Council. The Secretary-General regretted these developments and noted their wider implications for security and stability in the Caucasus. Although the question of recognition of States was a matter for sovereign States to decide, as there was no recognition of the independence of States on the part of the UN Secretariat or UN Secretary-General, Ban Ki-moon had to repeatedly uphold that Kosovo and Georgia were two different issues.

In the fall 2013, the signing of an agreement on association with the European Union provoked the deep political crisis in Ukraine and the violent clashes in the centre of Kyiv. The agreement signed on 21 February 2014 by President Yanukovych and the Foreign Ministers of Germany, France and Poland, failed to restore peace and tranquillity. The Secretary-General called for non-violent inclusive political process to preserve Ukraine's unity and territorial integrity.

Instead of de-escalation, tensions in Crimea and in eastern Ukraine continued to rise. Crimea declared its independence and joined the Russian Federation. The demonstrators in Donetsk and Luhansk claimed secession from Ukraine. Once again, the Secretary-General, the United Nations and the international community faced the dilemmas over territorial integrity and the right to self-determination. Some Member States moved to apply targeted sanctions against the Russian Federation, Kyiv stated that Crimea was an integral part of Ukraine. Ban Ki-moon visited Moscow and Kyiv to de-escalate tensions. He acknowledged concerns

relating to the situation of Russian minorities in Ukraine and reiterated that this crisis could only be solved through peaceful, diplomatic solutions based on the principles of the Charter.

Aside of repeated appeals for peaceful settlement of dispute, the Secretary-General and the United Nations remained on sidelines of the crisis. The situation in eastern Ukraine remained fragile and prone to escalation. In the summer of 2014, amidst intense fighting in Donetsk and Luhansk, a civilian aircraft on an international flight, Malaysia Airlines flight MH17, crashed in eastern Ukraine. The only way towards a sustainable political solution offered the Minsk Agreements, a package of measures agreed by Germany, France, Russia and Ukraine, the so-called Normandy Format. Without their implementation the situation in eastern Ukraine remained volatile and in a "protracted conflict" status.

The Middle East peace process and Iran's nuclear programme were two issues of global impact and of the larger Middle Eastern context. Their outcomes were source of optimism and frustration for the Secretary-General and the international community. The 2015 Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) gave hope that the world could overcome global divisions in the name of the common good, as the P5+1 Powers—China, France, Russia, the United Kingdom, the United States and Germany—and Iran together resolved questions regarding Iran's nuclear programme. The Israeli–Palestinian conflict was not just one of many conflicts in the region and the world, and Ban Ki-moon would not be the first Secretary-General to leave the office reflecting on missed opportunities over his term.

The Security Council had acted on Iranian development of sensitive nuclear technologies and introduced several measures aimed to restrict them until a negotiated solution could be found. The JCPOA was negotiated between the P5+1 and Iran outside of the UN framework and the Secretary-General's reach, but the Security Council adopted resolution 2231 (2015), which endorsed the settlement and provided a defined time schedule for the removal of the Iran nuclear issue from the Council's agenda.

The JCPOA was a triumph of diplomacy for the resolution and prevention of conflict. President Barack Obama claimed that this deal had basically avoided war with Iran and that this alternative would have been horrible. The United States lifted sanctions on Iran and the two countries continued to improve ties. UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon very strongly supported the JCPOA and welcomed it as a very good agreement. He commended Iran for implementing its nuclear-related

commitments and the European Union and the United States for their sanctions-related commitments. The JCPOA demonstrated that international proliferation concerns were best addressed through dialogue and patient diplomacy. UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon hoped the success of this agreement would contribute to greater regional and international cooperation for peace, security and stability in the Middle East region and beyond.

It is difficult to assess Ban Ki-moon's input in the Middle East process. Although the United Nations had been a member of the Quartet, it does not appear that the Organization or its Secretary-General would have any immediate effect on the process. Gunnar Jarring's mediation role in the early 1970s was the last of the UN's initiatives. The United States, for the most part, maintained exclusive leadership in the peace process. Therefore, when an eventual breakthrough did occur, it had little to do with the Secretary-General or the United Nations. Nonetheless, it would be incorrect to dismiss the Secretary-General's and the UN's role entirely. To the extent that world public opinion and the UN responsibility played a role in ending the conflict, Ban Ki-moon's voice or criticism had an effect. In January 2016, the Secretary-General asserted that the time has come for Israelis, Palestinians and the international community to see the writing on the wall: the status quo was untenable. He insisted that the world faces a simple truth: people would always resist occupation.

The Secretary-General made clear his personal engagement in the continuing search for a just, lasting and comprehensive solution to the Arab–Israeli conflict. During his first trip to the region in the early days of his tenure he outlined his vision: "The basis for a solution is clear: an end to the occupation that began in 1967, the creation of an independent and viable Palestinian State, alongside a secure and fully recognized State of Israel, and a just, lasting and comprehensive peace in the region, as called for in the resolutions of the United Nations Security Council."[3]

As Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon reflected on achievements, but also on missed opportunities over his decade, in many ways his decade could be described as a lost decade for Israeli–Palestinian peace-making. The admission of Palestine to the United Nations as a non-member Observer State in 2012 was a historic milestone, but the decade has

[3] SG/SM/10926, 28 March 2007.

witnessed three unsuccessful United States' attempts at negotiating a peaceful settlement, three armed conflicts, thousands of dead, the vast majority of them Palestinian civilians, and expanding Israeli settlements. The Secretary-General has visited the region 11 times, including during times of war, to see the situation first hand, help negotiate ceasefires and push the peace process forward.

Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon argued never to accept bias against Israel within United Nations bodies. At the same time, he insisted that Israel need to realize that the reality of keeping the Palestinian people under military occupation would continue to generate criticism and calls for accountability. Ban Ki-moon saw as a troubling measure of the state of play that, during his tenure, the Security Council adopted only two resolutions on the Middle East peace process. As if to respond, during the last meeting of 2016 the Security Council adopted resolution 2334 (2016), demonstrating its leadership, reaffirming that Israel's establishment of settlements in Palestinian territory constituted a major obstacle to the vision of two States living side-by-side in peace and security. Indeed, the historic peace agreement in Colombia that ended the decades-long conflict showed what was possible through patient and painstaking diplomacy.

UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon greatly appreciated the support of the United States for the United Nations. In January 2009, Ban Ki-moon welcomed President Obama's statement that the United Nations was an extraordinarily constructive partner of the United States for bringing peace and security to the world. President Obama pushed the reset button in the relations between the United States and the United Nations and has shown strong commitment for multilateralism. The restored UN–US partnership helped to respond to critical global issues: climate change, the consequences of the international economic crisis, global health and global terrorism.

The decade of 2007–2016 has been a decade of progress and setbacks alike. The adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Paris Agreement on climate change demonstrated that multilateral diplomacy could triumph over politics—at least in the short term. The establishment of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) has also been among the high points. The inability to resolve several protracted conflicts—Syria, Yemen, Israel–Palestine—has been a source of tremendous frustration. Here, however, Ban Ki-moon's responsibility would be shared: major

countries with influence had a duty to find unity and use their influence to pursue a political solution to help end these conflicts.

The decade of 2007–2016 was heavy with responsibility but Ban Ki-moon seemed to have made the most of it. He has succeeded in making his decade dynamic and productive. And where international cooperation was strong, peaceful solutions and transitions also followed. The United Nations under his watch continued to deliver results, although sometimes progress has been too slow and uneven. Armed conflicts, poverty, disaster and discrimination continue to stalk the world and new threats to the global commons, shared values and global governance are rising. The United Nations and its Secretary-General have much work still to do, including strengthening and reforming the United Nations itself. And they need to do more and to do it better to prevent the Organization to slip to the sidelines of international politics. The world needs more united nations to work together and more of the United Nations to help them to succeed. In the words of Ban Ki-moon: "Give peace a chance. Give diplomacy a chance. Stop fighting and start talking."[4]

Ban Ki-moon was leaving the United Nations as a responsible and accomplished managerial Secretary, certainly more Secretary than a General, fully aware and respectful of the contextual constraints set up by the Member States, especially the most influential among them. Nevertheless, his political and diplomatic instincts allowed him to sail through his decade avoiding the proverbial Scylla and Charybdis of wracking his office by antagonizing the key Member States.

[4]SG/SM/17460-GA/11753, 14 January 2016; SG/SM/18058, 14 September 2016; SG/SM/15240, 28 August 2013.

Chronology

2006

13 October	General Assembly appoints Ban Ki-moon of the Republic of Korea as UN Secretary-General.

2007

1 January	Ban Ki-moon starts five-year term as Secretary-General.
1 January	Belgium, Indonesia, Italy, Panama, and South Africa start two-year term as elected Security Council members.
2 January	Ban Ki-moon begins his first working day at UN Headquarters.
8 January	Ban Ki-moon attends his first meeting of the Security Council.
4 January	Margaret Chan of China takes office as Director-General of the World Health Organization.
5 January	Ban Ki-moon appoints Asha-Rose Migiro of Tanzania as Deputy Secretary-General.
9 January	Democratic Republic of Congo inaugurates the first democratically-elected National Assembly in more than 40 years.

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M. Jesenský, *The United Nations under Ban Ki-moon*,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-12220-1

12 January	Security Council fails to adopt a draft resolution on the situation in Myanmar, owing to vetoes by China and Russia.
16 January	Ban Ki-moon makes a courtesy visit to Washington, DC, to meet US President George W. Bush.
23 January	Security Council resolution 1740 establishes a UN Political Mission in Nepal (UNMIN).
26 January	General Assembly adopts resolution A/RES/61/255, sponsored by 103 Member States, condemning any denial of the Holocaust.
26 January	Ban Ki-moon makes public his financial disclosure statement for 2006.
30 January	Commandant Seema Dhundia of India leads the first all-female Police Unit in the UN Mission in Liberia (UNMIL).
2 February	UN Special Envoy Martti Ahtisaari presents his plan for Serbian Kosovo which includes the right to seek membership in international organizations.
6 February	United Nations and Lebanon sign the Agreement on the Establishment of a Special Tribunal.
16 February	Ban Ki-moon unveils the Counter-Terrorism Online Handbook.
21 February	Belgrade and Pristina start discussions on Ahtisaari's proposal for Kosovo.
26 February	International Court of Justice finds that Serbia did not commit genocide under customary international law in Bosnia and Herzegovina.
26 February	General Assembly President Sheikha Haya Rashed Al Khalifa of Bahrain meets with the Pope in Rome.
7 March	United States decides not to seek a seat on the Human Rights Council.
22 March	Mortar explodes nearby Ban Ki-moon during his press conference in Baghdad.
24 March	Security Council widens its sanctions against Iran (resolution 1747). Iran maintains its peaceful

	nuclear programme presents no threat to international peace and security.
26 March	Ban Ki-moon hands over to the Security Council Martti Ahtisaari's proposal for the Kosovo status settlement.
28 March	Ban Ki-moon addresses the Summit of the League of Arab States in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia.
28 March	General Assembly President Sheikha Haya Rashed Al Khalifa becames the first President and the first Arab Muslim woman ever to address a Summit of the League of Arab States.
30 March	Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and its Optional Protocol formally open for signature at the UN Headquarters.
4 April	General Assembly approves the first serious overhaul of the administration of justice within the UN in 60 years. The Dispute Tribunal replaces the Joint Appeals Boards and the Joint Disciplinary Committees.
16 April	Sudan accepts in full the deployment of an African Union-United Nations hybrid operation.
17 April	Security Council holds its first-ever open debate exploring the relationship between energy, security and climate.
18 April	Ban Ki-moon meets with Pope Benedict XVI in Vatican City.
19 April	String of bombings leaves nearly 200 people dead and many more injured in Baghdad.
26 April	Ban Ki-moon designates Jorge Sampaio, the former President of Portugal, as High Representative for the Alliance of Civilizations.
27 April	Security Council lifts a ban on diamond imports from Liberia (resolution 1753).
1 May	Ban Ki-moon appoints Gro Harlem Brundtland of Norway, Han Seung-soo of the Republic of Korea, and Ricardo Lagos Escobar of Chile, Special Envoys on Climate Change.

2 May	International Criminal Court judges issue warrants for the arrest of Sudan leaders in connection with crimes committed in Darfur.
3 May	Ban Ki-moon co-chairs the launch of the International Compact with Iraq in Sharm el-Sheikh, Egypt.
10 May	Ban Ki-moon appoints Harumi Hori of Japan, Matti Paavo Pellonpää of Finland and Michael F. Raboin of the United States as members of the Board of the UN Register of Damage caused by the Construction of the Wall in the occupied Palestinian territory.
17 May	World Bank President Paul Wolfowitz of the United States resigns after internal review determined that he broke all rules and indulged in favouritism and nepotism.
24 May	General Assembly elects Srgjan Kerim of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia as the President of the sixty-second session.
30 May	Security Council authorizes the creation of the Special Tribunal for Lebanon (resolution 1757).
4 June	Special Court for Sierra Leone starts the trial of former Liberian President Charles Taylor charged of war crimes, crimes against humanity and other serious violations of international humanitarian law.
7–8 June	Group of Eight (G-8) Summit at Heiligendamm in Germany.
7 June	Bangladesh ratifies the International Convention for the Suppression of Acts of Nuclear Terrorism. The Convention meets required 22 ratifications or accessions to enter into force on 7 July.
14 June	Kurt Waldheim, former UN Secretary-General and President of Austria, dies.
24 June	Six Spanish peacekeepers of the UN Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) die in terrorist attack in south Lebanon.
29 June	Ban Ki-moon pays a surprise visit to Kabul, his first to Afghanistan since taking the post.

29 June Security Council terminates the mandate of UN Monitoring, Verification and Inspection Commission (UNMOVIC) in Iraq (resolution 1762).

29 June General Assembly approves restructuring of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and establishes the Department of Field Support to oversee active peacekeeping operations.

29 June Security Council designates Miroslav Lajčák of Slovakia as the High Representative for Bosnia and Herzegovina (resolution 1764).

9 July Board of Governors of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) agrees to resume inspections in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK).

11 July Ban Ki-moon addresses the Royal Institute of International Affairs, Chatham House in London.

14 July The IAEA inspection confirms the shutdown of the Yongbyon nuclear facility in the DPRK.

16 July President George W. Bush renews United States commitment to a negotiated two-State solution, Israel and Palestine living side by side.

27 July United Nations selects Skanska USA Building Inc. as Construction Manager for the pre-construction phase of the UN Capital Master Plan for the renovation of the UN Headquarters in New York.

31 July Security Council authorizes the deployment of a 26,000-strong joint UN-African Union force to end violence in Sudan's Darfur region (resolution 1769).

1 August Guatemala's legislature approves the International Commission against Impunity in Guatemala (CICIG).

6 September Luciano Pavarotti, the world-renowned tenor and UN Messenger of Peace, dies.

13 September General Assembly adopts, by a vote of 143 in favour to 4 against (Australia, Canada, New

Zealand, and the United States), with 11 abstentions, the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

21 September Ban Ki-moon designates Princess Haya Bint Al Hussein of Jordan, Israeli/Argentinean conductor Daniel Barenboim, Paulo Coelho of Brazil, and Japanese-American violinist Midori Goto as UN Messengers of Peace.

24 September UN High-level meeting on climate change in New York gathers top officials from 150 countries.

25 September Security Council establishes the UN Mission in the Central African Republic and Chad (MINURCAT) (resolution 1778).

2–4 October Leaders of South Korea and North Korea meet in Pyongyang and sign the Declaration on the Advancement of South-North Korean Relations, Peace and Prosperity.

15 October Nobel Peace Prize is awarded to former US Vice-President Al Gore and to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC).

16 October General Assembly elects Burkina Faso, Costa Rica, Croatia, Libya and Viet Nam as non-permanent members of the Security Council for 2008–2009.

30 October General Assembly votes, by a vote of 184 in favour to 4 against (Israel, Marshall Islands, Palau, and United States), with 1 abstention (Micronesia), to end the 45-year-old US trade embargo against Cuba.

6 November King Abdullah of Saudi Arabia visits the Pope in the Vatican, in a historic meeting, the first of its kind.

27 November Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert and Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas, meeting in Annapolis under the US auspices, agree to launch negotiations to conclude a peace treaty resolving all outstanding issues.

3 December The Thirteenth Conference of the Parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP 13) opens in Bali, Indonesia.

4 December US National Intelligence Estimate reports no evidence of an ongoing nuclear weapons programme or undeclared nuclear facilities in Iran.

11 December Two bomb blasts in Algiers kill 17 United Nations staff.

18 December General Assembly, by a vote of 104 in favour to 54 against, with 29 abstentions, calls for a moratorium on executions in all States that still maintain the death penalty.

21 December United Nations and the Netherlands sign a Headquarters Agreement establishing the seat of the Special Tribunal for Lebanon in The Hague.

22 December General Assembly adopts a $4.17 billion budget for the UN in the 2008–2009 biennium, by a vote of 142 in favour to 1 against (United States), with no abstentions, voting on the budget for the first time in 20 years.

31 December African Union-UN Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID) takes over from the African Union Mission in the Sudan (AMIS).

2008

1 January Burkina Faso, Costa Rica, Croatia, Libya and Viet Nam start two-year term as elected Security Council members.

2 January Ban Ki-moon receives a certified copy of the UN Charter from US National Archivist Allan Weinstein.

3 January Government of Sri Lanka terminates the 2002 Ceasefire Agreement with the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE).

18 January Ban Ki-moon designates actor George Clooney of the United States as a UN Messenger of Peace.

24 January Ban Ki-moon addresses the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland.

28 January	UN Postal Administration and the Israeli Postal Company issue simultaneously Holocaust commemorative postal stamps.
28 January	Former Indonesian President Suharto dies.
29 January	Colombia, one of 44 States necessary for its entry into force, ratifies the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty.
30 January	First permanent exhibit on the Holocaust is unveiled at the UN Headquarters in New York.
17 February	Assembly of the Provisional Institutions of Self-Government of the Serbian Province of Kosovo unilaterally declares independence despite Security Council resolution 1244 (1999), which recognizes Kosovo as integral part of Serbia.
28 February	Mwai Kibaki and Raila Odinga announce agreement to resolve the post-election crisis in Kenya.
3 March	Security Council approves a new round of sanctions against Iran (resolution 1803).
3 April	Ledra Street in Nicosia, Cyprus, is reopened, for the first time since 1963.
18 April	Pope Benedict XVI addresses the General Assembly, the fourth address at the UN by a Pope.
29 April	Russia establishes direct ties with Abkhazia and South Ossetia, Georgia's breakaway territories.
3 May	UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities enters into force.
20 May	Syria and Israel started indirect peace talks under the auspices of Turkey.
23 May	The International Court of Justice issues a decision in the sovereignty dispute between Malaysia and Singapore over the islands of Pedra Branca/Pulau Batu Puteh, Middle Rocks and South Ledge.
30 May	Diplomatic Conference in Dublin adopts new Cluster Munitions Convention.
4 June	The General Assembly elects, by acclamation, Miguel d'Escoto Brockmann of Nicaragua as President of its sixty-third session.

9 June	Lakhdar Brahimi, head of the Independent Panel on Safety and Security of UN Personnel and Premises Worldwide, presents its report to Ban Ki-moon.
10 June	UN Monitoring, Verification and Inspection Commission (UNMOVIC) presents its final report on Iraq's weapons of mass destruction.
10 June	Fighting breaks out between Djibouti and Eritrea.
21 June	Pact on Security, Stability and Development in the Great Lakes Region enters into force, following its ratification by 8 of the 11 core countries of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR).
24 June	Sir David Veness, the Head of the UN Department of Safety and Security, resigns in the context of the terrorist attack on the UN in Algiers.
26 June	DPRK submits the declaration of its nuclear programme to China, Chair of the six-party talks towards the verifiable denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula.
1 July	UN publications price is reduced by 75% in least developed countries and by 50% in developing countries to make them more affordable to educational institutions, students, teachers and researchers in poorer countries.
3 July	Ban Ki-moon visits Seoul, the Republic of Korea, the first time since becoming Secretary-General.
8 July	Seven UN peacekeepers die after attack on African Union-UN Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID) military and police convoy in Sudan.
9 July	Group of Eight (G-8) Summit in Toyako, Hokkaido, Japan.
11 July	Security Council fails to impose sanctions against Zimbabwe, as China, Libya, Russia, South Africa and Viet Nam vote against, with Indonesia abstaining.

14 July Luis Moreno-Ocampo, the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court, presents evidence accusing President Omer Hassan Al-Bashir of Sudan of responsibility for crimes in Darfur.

16 July The International Court of Justice (ICJ) orders the United States not execute five Mexican nationals on death row in US prisons pending its final ruling on the matter, stating that the US is in breach of its international obligations.

21 July Serbian authorities arrest Radovan Karadžić, former President of the Republika Srpska in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

28 July Ban Ki-moon appoints Navanethem (Navi) Pillay of South Africa as High Commissioner for Human Rights.

30 July Seven-year-long Doha Round Trade Talks end without agreement.

30 July The Security Council terminates the mandate of the UN Mission in Ethiopia and Eritrea (UNMEE) (resolution 1827).

7–8 August Georgia opens military operations in South Ossetia, its breakaway province, starting hostilities between Georgia and Russia.

8–24 August XXIX Olympic Games in Beijing, China.

12 August President Nicolas Sarkozy of France proposes peace plan to end hostilities between Georgia and Russia in South Ossetia.

14 August Nigeria transfers authority in the Bakassi peninsula to Cameroon, in implementation of the 2002 ruling of the ICJ and the 2006 Greentree Agreement.

19 August Transitional Federal Government of Somalia and the Alliance for the Re-liberation of Somalia (ARS) sign peace and reconciliation Agreement in Djibouti.

26 August Russia recognizes South Ossetia and Abkhazia as independent States.

3 September Greek Cypriot leader, Demetris Christofias, and the Turkish Cypriot leader, Mehmet Ali Talat,

	launch negotiations to find a comprehensive settlement of the Cyprus problem.
22 September	The Security Council extends the authorization of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in Afghanistan for 12 months (resolution 1833).
24 September	United Nations hosts the first UN Private Sector Forum on the Millennium Development Goals and food sustainability.
8 October	The General Assembly, by a vote of 77 in favour to 6 against (Albania, Marshall Islands, Micronesia, Nauru, Palau, and United States), with 74 abstentions, seek an advisory opinion from the International Court of Justice on the legality of Kosovo's declaration of independence.
9 October	UN launches the first online version of the *Yearbook of the United Nations.*
10 October	Nobel Peace Prize is awarded to Martti Ahtisaari of Finland.
13 October	United States and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea reach an agreement on denuclearization verification measures, allowing for the resumption of the six-party process.
15 October	Lebanon and Syria establish full diplomatic relations.
17 October	Ban Ki-moon attends the Francophonie Summit in Québec City, Canada.
17 October	General Assembly elects Austria, Japan, Mexico, Turkey and Uganda as non-permanent members of the Security Council for 2009–2010.
20 October	General Assembly approves initiative to erect a permanent memorial at UN Headquarters to the victims of the transatlantic slave trade.
23 October	India successfully launches Chandrayaan 1 spacecraft.
5 November	Senator Barack Hussein Obama is elected President of the United States.
12–13 November	The General Assembly meeting on the interfaith dialogue features 10 Heads of State, 4 Heads of Government and 18 Ministers in attendance.

14–15 November G-20 holds emergency summit in Washington, DC on the global financial crisis triggered by the sub-prime mortgage crisis in the United States.

29 November–2 December Follow-up Conference on Financing for Development in Doha, Qatar.

1–12 December UN Conference on Climate Change in Poznań, Poland.

3–4 December Signing conference of the Convention on Cluster Munitions in Oslo, Norway, brings 94 signatures and 4 ratifications by the attending countries.

12 December Parliament of Japan adopts the Replenishment Support Special Measures Law, allowing Japan to continue for a further year its activities in Afghanistan.

14 December Special Envoy for Niger, Robert Fowler of Canada, his assistant Louis Guay, and their UN driver, Soumana Mounkaila, go missing while driving near Niamey, Niger.

18 December International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR) finds Colonel Théoneste Bagosora guilty of the murder of 10 Belgian peacekeepers in April 1994 and sentences to life in prison three senior Rwandan military officers.

18 December Ban Ki-moon appoints Ján Kubiš of Slovakia as Executive Secretary of the UN Economic Commission for Europe (ECE).

22 December Paris Club members cancel the remaining 20% of Iraq's debt ($7.8 billion).

27 December Israel launches a major offensive against the Gaza Strip to prevent Hamas rocket attacks.

2009

1 January Austria, Japan, Mexico, Turkey and Uganda start two-year term as elected Security Council members.

5 January Israel launches ground operation into the Gaza Strip.

6–7 January	The Security Council holds open debate on the fighting in Gaza.
8 January	The Security Council adopts resolution 1860 (2009), by a vote of 14 in favour with the United States abstaining, calling for an immediate, durable and fully respected ceasefire, leading to the full withdrawal of Israeli forces from Gaza.
8 January	Ban Ki-moon condemns Israeli firing on a UN aid convoy in Gaza, killing two UNRWA staff.
13 January	Iraq deposits its instrument of accession to the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on their Destruction (CWC).
14 January	The Security Council urges Djibouti and Eritrea to resolve their border dispute peacefully and demands Eritrea to withdraw its forces (resolution 1862).
15–16 January	The General Assembly resumes its tenth emergency special session on Illegal Israeli actions in Occupied East Jerusalem and the rest of the Occupied Palestinian Territory to address the Gaza crisis.
15 January	The UN Economic and Social Council elects Sylvie Lucas of Luxembourg as its President, the second woman to lead that body.
16 January	The General Assembly demands, by a vote of 143 in favour to 3 against (US, Israel, and Nauru), with 9 abstentions, full respect for the Security Council resolution 1860.
17 January	Israel announces ceasefire in the Gaza Strip.
20 January	Ban Ki-moon visits Gaza and southern Israel.
21 January	Barack Hussein Obama is inaugurated as the forty-fourth President of the United States.
21 January	US President Obama suspends ongoing trials at the Guantánamo Bay detention facility, including trials of child soldiers Omar Khadr and Mohamed

	Jawad. His executive orders ban use of torture, direct the CIA to close its network of secret prisons and initiate a process for the closure of Guantánamo within a year.
25 January	Bolivia holds referendum on its new Constitution.
26 January	The International Criminal Court (ICC) in The Hague opens the trial of Congolese warlord Thomas Lubanga Dyilo, the first trial in the ICC history.
27 January	The Security Council renews the mandates of the UN Operation in Côte d'Ivoire (UNOCI) and the French forces that support it (resolution 1865).
31 January	Iraq holds provincial elections, its first fully Iraqi-led provincial elections.
4 February	Ban Ki-moon makes a surprise visit to Afghanistan.
6 February	Ban Ki-moon makes a surprise, eight-hour visit to Iraq.
13 February	Security Council extends the mandate of the UN Observer Mission in Georgia (UNOMIG) by four months, until 15 June (resolution 1866).
17 February	Government of Sudan and the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM) sign the Agreement of goodwill and confidence-building for the Darfur settlement.
1 March	Special Tribunal for Lebanon commences functioning in The Hague.
4 March	International Criminal Court issues an arrest warrant for President Omer Hassan Al-Bashir of Sudan, the first warrant of arrest ever issued for a sitting Head of State.
16 March	UN Mission in the Central African Republic and Chad (MINURCAT) takes over the military and security responsibilities of the European Union Force (EUFOR).
21 March	Treaty on a Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone in Central Asia enters into force.

25 March Security Council designates Valentin Inzko as High Representative for Bosnia and Herzegovina (resolution 1869).

26 March Board of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) appoints Yukiya Amano of Japan as Director General.

31 March General Assembly appoints Helen Clark of New Zealand as Administrator of the UN Development Programme (UNDP).

31 March United States announces that it will seek a seat in the Human Rights Council.

2 April Russian President Dmitry Medvedev and US President Barack Obama issue the Joint Statement, pledging to achieve a nuclear-weapon-free world.

3 April Human Rights Council appoints Judge Richard Goldstone, former Chief Prosecutor of the International Criminal Tribunals for the former Yugoslavia and Rwanda, to lead an independent fact-finding mission to investigate humanitarian law violations during the recent conflict in the Gaza Strip.

5 April President Obama promises "aggressive pursuit" of US ratification of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty.

14 April Democratic People's Republic of Korea informs the International Atomic Energy Agency that it has decided to cease all cooperation.

22 April General Assembly designates 22 April as International Mother Earth Day.

22 April Special Envoy for the Niger, Robert Fowler, and his companions, abducted in West Africa, are released.

22 April Secretary-General receives the Board of Inquiry report on incidents that occurred in the Gaza Strip between 27 December 2008 and 19 January 2009 and in which death or injuries occurred at, and/or damage was done to, UN premises.

11 May	Security Council holds ministerial meeting on the situation in the Middle East.
12 May	General Assembly elects 18 States to serve on the Human Rights Council in Geneva, including the United States for the first time.
13 May	United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) awards the 2008 Félix Houphouët-Boigny Peace Prize to the President of Brazil, Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva.
19 May	Ban Ki-moon appoints former US President William J. Clinton as UN Special Envoy for Haiti.
25 May	Democratic People's Republic of Korea conducts an underground nuclear test.
29 May	Security Council, by a vote of 14 in favour to 1 against (Turkey), extends the mandate of the UN Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus (UNFICYP) (resolution 1873).
4 June	President Obama speaks in Cairo, Egypt, promising a new chapter in relations between the US and the Islamic world.
10 June	General Assembly elects Ali Abdussalam Treki of Libya as President of its sixty-fourth session.
12 June	Security Council condemns the nuclear test by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and tightens its sanctions against it (resolution 1874).
15 June	UN Observer Mission in Georgia (UNOMIG) ends, as Russia opposes the extension of its mandate.
24–26 June	UN hosts the Conference on the World Financial and Economic Crisis and its Impact on Development to assess the worst global economic downturn since the Great Depression.
28 June	Military *coup* against President Manuel Zelaya of Honduras.
30 June	General Assembly adopts UN peacekeeping budget for 14 peacekeeping missions, approaching $7.8 billion for the period from 1 July 2009 to 30 June 2010, a new record.

30 June	General Assembly unanimously condemns *coup d'état* in Honduras, demanding immediate restoration of President Zelaya.
30 June	United States forces withdraw from Iraqi cities in accordance with the Status of Forces Agreement.
3–4 July	Ban Ki-moon visits Myanmar to support national reconciliation.
6 July	General Assembly re-appoints Supachai Panitchpakdi of Thailand as Secretary-General of the UN Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD).
21 July	General Assembly holds special session on the responsibility to protect.
5–7 August	First annual Global Model UN conference in Geneva, Switzerland, hosts the best university-level students from Model UN programmes organized around the world.
6 August	President Joseph Kabila of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) and President Paul Kagame of Rwanda, meet in Goma, the first official bilateral meeting between the countries since breaking off diplomatic relations in 1996.
18 August	Kim Dae-jung, former President of the Republic of Korea and Nobel Peace laureate, dies.
26 August	US Senator Edward Moore Kennedy dies.
14 September	General Assembly adopts by consensus its first resolution on the concept of the responsibility to protect (R2P).
15 September	Security Council extends the mandate of the UN Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Sierra Leone (UNIPSIL) for one year (resolution 1886).
22 September	UN Climate Summit becomes the largest ever gathering of Heads of State and Government on climate change (101 Heads of State and Government from 163 countries).
24 September	Barack Obama presides over Security Council summit meeting on nuclear non-proliferation and nuclear disarmament, as the first sitting President of the United States do so, adopting resolution

1887 (2009), calling upon all States to sign and ratify the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT).

24 September The United States participates, for the first time, at Conference on Facilitating the Entry into Force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) in New York.

25 September General Assembly denies, by a recorded vote of 23 against to 4 in favour, with 6 abstentions, the participation of President of Madagascar, who came to power following a military-backed coup, in the general debate.

25 September Foreign Minister of Brazil addresses the Security Council to ensure the security of Brazil's embassy in Honduras, sheltering deposed President Jose Manuel Zelaya since 21 September.

28 September President Zelaya addresses the General Assembly via telephone from his refuge in Tegucigalpa, Honduras, talking over a cell phone held up to a microphone by Honduran Foreign Minister Patricia Isabel Rodas Baca.

9 October US President Barack Obama is awarded the Nobel Peace Prize.

9 October UN Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH) aircraft crashes in Haiti claiming lives of 11 peacekeepers from Uruguay and Jordan.

10 October Armenia and Turkey sign in Zürich two protocols normalizing their relations.

15 October General Assembly elects Bosnia and Herzegovina, Brazil, Gabon, Lebanon and Nigeria as non-permanent members of the Security Council for 2010–2011.

28 October General Assembly, with a recorded vote of 187 in favour to 3 against (Israel, United States and Palau), and 2 abstentions, calls on the United States to end a trade embargo against Cuba.

28 October Attack on UN guesthouse in Kabul, claimed by the Taliban, kills five UN staff members.

2 November Independent Election Commission foregoes a run-off vote and declares Hamid Karzai the winner of presidential elections in Afghanistan.

10 November General Assembly declares 18 July, former South African President Nelson Mandela's birthday, as Nelson Mandela International Day.

20 November Herman van Rompuy of Belgium becomes the first President of the European Union.

1 December Ban Ki-moon designates musician Stevie Wonder of the United States as UN Messenger of Peace.

23 December Security Council imposes sanctions on Eritrea over its refusal to withdraw from Djibouti (resolution 1907).

2010

1 January 2010 Bosnia and Herzegovina, Brazil, Gabon, Lebanon and Nigeria start two-year term as elected Security Council members.

11 January Ban Ki-moon opens the Temporary North Lawn Building in New York.

12 January Devastating earthquake in Haiti kills 101 UN staff, including Special Representative Hédi Annabi, the highest number of casualties in the UN's history.

19 January Security Council raises the ceiling for the military component of the UN Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH) from 6940 to 8940 troops, following devastating earthquake (resolution 1908).

20 January Permanent Observer of the Holy See, Archbishop Celestino Migliore, presides a mass at New York's Holy Family Church for the Haiti earthquake victims.

20 January Ban Ki-moon appoints Filippo Grandi of Italy Commissioner-General of the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA).

22 January	Israel makes a payment of $10.5 million to the UN for the losses sustained during the Gaza conflict from 27 December 2008 to 19 January 2009.
28 January	Ban Ki-moon appoints Staffan de Mistura of Sweden his Special Representative and Head of the UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA).
12–28 February	XXI Winter Olympics in Vancouver, Canada.
23 February	Government of Sudan and the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM) sign in Doha the Framework Agreement for the Resolution of the Conflict in Darfur.
26 February	Security Council extends the mandate of the UN Integrated Mission in Timor-Leste (UNMIT) until 26 February 2011 (resolution 1912).
11 March	UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) makes Argentine soccer star Lionel Messi its Goodwill Ambassador.
16 March	Ban Ki-moon appoints Anthony Lake of the United States as Executive Director of the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF).
26 March	Russia and the United States conclude negotiations on a successor agreement to the Treaty on the Reduction and Limitation of Strategic Offensive Arms (START).
26 March	Republic of Korea ship Cheonan sinks off the coast of the Korean peninsula with the loss of 46 lives. Democratic People's Republic of Korea denies its responsibility.
9 April	US President Obama and President Medvedev of Russia sign in Prague a successor agreement to the Treaty on the Reduction and Limitation of Strategic Offensive Arms (START).
12 April	President Lech Kaczyński of Poland and many government and army officials die in plane crash in Smolensk, Russia.
13 April	US President Obama chairs Nuclear Security Summit in Washington, DC.

15 April Sudan concludes its first national elections in 24 years.

20 April General Assembly re-elect António Manuel de Oliveira Guterres of Portugal as UN High Commissioner for Refugees.

20 April International Court of Justice delivers its final and binding judgment in the case concerning the dispute between Argentina and Uruguay over pulp mills on the Uruguay River.

21 April Juan Antonio Samaranch, former President of the International Olympic Committee (IOC), dies.

27 April Queen Rania Al Abdullah of Jordan visits UN Headquarters to launch a new children's book on cross-cultural understanding (*The Sandwich Swap*).

1 May–31 October China hosts Expo 2010—"One World, One UN"—in Shanghai.

3–28 May Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) in New York.

28 May Security Council extends the mandate of the UN Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC) until 30 June 2010, renaming it UN Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) (resolution 1925).

31 May Security Council expresses deep regret at the loss of life during the Israeli military operation in international waters against the convoy sailing to Gaza.

2 June Human Rights Council in Geneva decides to send a fact-finding mission to investigate violations of international law resulting from the Israeli attack on a humanitarian aid flotilla for Gaza.

9 June Security Council, by a vote of 12 in favour to 2 against (Brazil, Turkey), with 1 abstention

(Lebanon), imposes additional sanctions on Iran (resolution 1929).

11 June General Assembly elects Joseph Deiss of Switzerland as President of its sixty-fifth session.

23 June Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) Report 2010 shows a mix of progress and obstacles in reaching the anti-poverty targets and Ban Ki-moon calls for an intensified focus on priorities to achieve the Goals.

2 July General Assembly merges the four gender entities of the UN into UN Women—the UN Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women.

2 July Explosion at a demonstration of 3000 Kosovo Serbs in northern Kosovo claims one victim.

6 July Queen Elizabeth II of England visits the UN Headquarters in New York and addresses the General Assembly.

6 July Israel announces new policy on Gaza, moderating its blockade of the Gaza Strip.

14 July Marrack Goulding of the United Kingdom, the first UN Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, dies.

22 July International Court of Justice concludes that the unilateral declaration of independence by the Provisional Institutions of Self-Government of Kosovo did not violate any applicable rule of international law.

26 July Trial Chamber of the Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia finds Kaing Guek Eav, alias Duch, guilty of crimes against humanity and grave breaches of the Geneva Conventions of 1949 and sentences him to 35 years of imprisonment.

30 July Security Council renews the mandate of the African Union-UN Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID) until 31 July 2011 (resolution 1935).

3 August	Lebanese Armed Forces and the Israel Defense Forces exchange fire across the Blue Line in southern Lebanon, killing at least four people.
6 August	Ban Ki-moon visits Hiroshima, becoming the first UN Secretary-General to attend the Peace Memorial Ceremony, marking the anniversary of the US atomic bombing.
13 August	Optional Protocol to Convention on Safety and Security of UN and Associated Personnel enters into force.
27 August	Democratic People's Republic of Korea releases Aijalon Mahli Gomes, a US national, on humanitarian considerations, during the visit to Pyongyang by former US President Jimmy Carter.
29 August	UN commemorates first International Day against Nuclear Tests.
2 September	US President Barack Obama re-launches direct Israeli–Palestinian negotiations in Washington, DC, to resolve all final status issues in one year.
14 September	Ban Ki-moon appoints Michelle Bachelet of Chile, former President, the head of UN Women.
12 October	General Assembly elects Colombia, Germany, India, Portugal, and South Africa as non-permanent members of the Security Council for 2011–2012.
18–29 October	Tenth Meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the UN Convention on Biological Diversity convenes in Nagoya, Japan.
7 November	Myanmar holds the first general elections in 20 years.
12 December	Report by Dick Marty of Switzerland, Rapporteur of the Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly, reveals grave allegations of inhuman treatment of people and illicit trafficking in human organs by the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) leaders and members,

de facto allies of NATO, during the conflict in the Serbian Kosovo.

17 December Mohammed Bouazizi, a young vendor in Tunis, lights himself on fire in protest against authorities, starting mass demonstrations in Tunisia.

2011

1 January Colombia, Germany, India, Portugal and South Africa start two-year term as elected Security Council members.

1 January European External Action Service, one of the main innovations of the 2007 Lisbon Treaty, begins to operate.

9–15 January Sudan holds a referendum on Southern Sudan, a key element of the 2005 Comprehensive Peace Agreement.

15 January President Zine El Abidine Ben Ali of Tunisia steps down after 23 years in office.

19 January Security Council authorizes the deployment of an additional 2000 troops for the UN Operation in Côte d'Ivoire (UNOCI), until 30 June 2011, as the post-election crisis continues (resolution 1967).

24 January Terrorist attack at Domodedovo International Airport, Moscow, Russia, causes numerous deaths and injuries.

25 January French judicial authorities surrender Rwandese rebel leader Callixte Mbarushimana, indicted for crimes against humanity committed in the Democratic Republic of Congo, to face trial at the International Criminal Court in The Hague.

25 January Anti-government protests start in Cairo's main Tahrir Square in Egypt.

26 January Afghanistan inaugurates Wolesi Jirga, the Lower House of the Parliament, marking the end of the electoral process.

2 February Ban Ki-moon delivers the Cyril Foster Lecture at the University of Oxford.

4 February	Myanmar's Parliament elects new President and Vice-Presidents of the Union Government.
6–11 February	UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Navi Pillay, visits Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territory.
7 February	Final results of the referendum on self-determination for Southern Sudan confirm 98.83% support for independence.
7 February	Treaty on the Reduction and Limitation of Strategic Offensive Arms (START) between Russia and the United States enters into force.
8 February	Baroness Catherine Ashton, the High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy briefs the Security Council on the EU's work.
9 February	General Assembly holds its first informal thematic debate on disaster risk reduction.
11 February	President Hosni Mubarak of Egypt resigns after almost 30 years in power.
16 February	Lamberto Zannier, Head of the UN Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK), advocates immediate investigation into the Council of Europe report on organized criminal activities by the Kosovo Liberation Army members, including trafficking in illegal organs.
18 February	Security Council fails to adopt a resolution, by a vote of 14 in favour to 1 against (United States), describing as "illegal" Israeli settlements in Palestinian territory occupied since 1967 and demanding immediate halt of all settlement activities.
20 February	Ban Ki-moon urges King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa of Bahrain and his government to exercise maximum restraint against peaceful demonstrators.
21 February	Ban Ki-moon urges Colonel Muammar al-Qadhafi of Libya to stop violence against demonstrators.

23 February	League of Arab States suspends Libya's membership.
25 February	Human Rights Council holds a special session on the situation in Libya, the first time a member is the subject of a special session.
26 February	Security Council unanimously adopts resolution 1970 (2011), imposing an arms embargo on Libya.
1 March	General Assembly suspends Libya's membership in the Human Rights Council.
7 March	Trusteeship Council elects Philip John Parham of the United Kingdom as its President, and Martin Briens of France as its Vice-President.
11 March	Ban Ki-moon appoints Kassym-Jomart Tokayev of Kazakhstan as Director-General of the UN Office at Geneva (UNOG).
11 March	Devastating earthquake and subsequent tsunami hit Japan causing the release of radioactivity from the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant.
14 March	Troops from Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, under the auspices of the Gulf Cooperation Council, enter Bahrain to stop public demonstrations.
17 March	Security Council imposes a no-fly zone over Libya and authorizes Member States to protect civilians under threat of attack, including Benghazi, by a vote of 10 in favour to none against, with 5 abstentions (Brazil, China, Germany, India, Russia) (resolution 1973).
18 March	Ban Ki-moon expresses concern about the reported killing of demonstrators in Der'a, Syria.
30 March	Security Council imposes targeted sanctions against former President Laurent Gbagbo and his close associates in Côte d'Ivoire (resolution 1975).
30 March	Myanmar authorities transfer power from the State Peace and Development Council to the new Government of Myanmar.

11 April	Juan E. Mendez, UN Special Rapporteur on Torture, investigating claims of torture, is denied an unmonitored visit with Private Bradley Manning, US Army intelligence analyst accused of passing classified material to WikiLeaks.
15 April	International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia convicts two Croatian generals, Ante Gotovina and Mladen Markač, of crimes against humanity and violations of the laws or customs of war.
27 April	Security Council debates the situation in Syria for the first time.
1 May	US President Obama announces the death of Osama bin Laden.
3 May	General Assembly grants the delegation of the European Union the right to make interventions, the right of reply and the ability to present oral proposals and amendments.
19 May	US President Obama addresses the historic developments in the Middle East and North Africa, and the Israeli–Palestinian conflict. Obama proposes that the borders of Israel and Palestine should be based on the 1967 lines with mutually agreed swaps.
21 May	Ban Ki-moon attends the inauguration ceremony of President Alassane Ouattara in Yamoussoukro, Côte d'Ivoire.
25 May	African Union holds an Extraordinary Summit on Peace and Security Issues in Addis Ababa on the situation in Libya.
26 May	Serbian authorities arrest Ratko Mladić, former commander of the army of Republika Srpska in Bosnia and Herzegovina, indicted by the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia.
30 May–3 June	Fourth UN Conference on the Least Developed Countries in Istanbul, Turkey.
1 June	Organization of American States (OAS) reinstates Honduras into its ranks.

17 June Security Council recommends to the General Assembly that Ban Ki-moon be appointed Secretary-General of the United Nations for a second term of office, from 1 January 2012 to 31 December 2016 (resolution 1987).

17 June Security Council separates the sanctions regime concerning Al-Qaida and the Taliban, recognizing that some Taliban members joined the reconciliation process in Afghanistan (resolution 1988).

21 June General Assembly unanimously appoints Ban Ki-moon UN Secretary-General for a second five-year term beginning 1 January 2012.

22 June General Assembly elects Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser of Qatar as President of its sixty-sixth session.

23 June President Obama announces the start of the US withdrawal from Afghanistan.

23 June Bahraini authorities hand down the harsh sentences against political activists, human rights defenders and opposition leaders.

27 June International Criminal Court issues an arrest warrant for Muammar al-Qadhafi for crimes allegedly committed across Libya.

27 June Security Council establishes the UN Interim Security Force for Abyei (UNISFA), the disputed area claimed by Sudan and South Sudan (resolution 1990).

8 July Security Council establishes the UN Mission in the Republic of South Sudan (UNMISS), one day before the birth of South Sudan (resolution 1996).

9 July South Sudan becomes independent.

11 July Security Council closes the six-year-old UN Mission in the Sudan (UNMIS) (resolution 1997).

12 July Security Council adds attacks on schools and hospitals as criteria for the Secretary-General's

	annual list of those committing grave violations against children (resolution 1998).
13 July	Security Council recommends the admission of South Sudan as a UN Member State (resolution 1999).
14 July	General Assembly admits South Sudan as the 193rd Member of the United Nations.
20 July	Goran Hadžić, the final fugitive sought by the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY), is arrested.
6 September	ICTY convicts Momčilo Perišić, the former Chief of the General Staff of the Yugoslav Army, for crimes committed in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia.
16 September	General Assembly approves report of the Credentials Committee, by a recorded vote of 114 in favour to 17 against, with 15 abstentions, recommending that the National Transitional Council, represent Libya in the Assembly.
16 September	Security Council establishes the UN Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL) (resolution 2009).
21 September	President Dilma Rousseff of Brazil opens General Assembly annual high-level debate, as the first woman leader in the 66-year history of the UN.
23 September	Mahmoud Abbas, President of the Palestinian Authority, submits the application of Palestine for admission to UN membership.
29 September	Saudi Arabia grants women, for the first time, the right to vote and stand in municipal elections.
4 October	Security Council fails to adopt a resolution on the situation in Syria, by a vote of 9 in favour with 4 abstentions (Brazil, India, Lebanon and South Africa), and the negative votes of China and Russia.
7 October	President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf of Liberia and social activists Tawakkul Karman of Yemen and Leymah Gbowee of Liberia are awarded the Nobel Peace Prize.

14 October	United States, United Kingdom, Russia and Ban Ki-moon announce the appointment of Jaakko Laajava of Finland, as facilitator and Finland as the host for the 2012 Conference on the establishment of a Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons.
18 October	Israel and Hamas exchange prisoners, releasing Israeli Sergeant Gilad Shalit and 477 Palestinian prisoners.
20 October	Former Libyan leader Muammar Al-Qadhafi dies.
21 October	General Assembly elects Guatemala, Morocco, Pakistan and Togo as non-permanent members of the Security Council for 2012–2013.
22 October	Prince Sultan bin Abdulaziz al-Saud, the Crown Prince of Saudi Arabia, dies.
23 October	National Transitional Council (NTC) in Benghazi declares the full liberation of Libya.
23 October	Tunisia holds a historic Constituent Assembly election.
24 October	General Assembly elects Azerbaijan as non-permanent member of the Security Council for 2012–2013.
25 October	General Assembly demands, by a recorded vote of 186 in favour to 2 against (United States, Israel), with 3 abstentions (Marshall Islands, Micronesia, and Palau), lifting US economic blockade against Cuba.
27 October	Security Council terminates the provisions of its resolution 1973 (2011) under which the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) has conducted air raids in Libya (resolution 2016).
31 October	UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) admits Palestine as a Member State.
14 November	League of Arab States suspends Syria from its meetings and activities.
28 November	Democratic Republic of Congo holds the second democratic election.
29 November	Egypt holds the first stage of the parliamentary elections.

30 November Serbia and Kosovo resume the European Union-facilitated dialogue.

2 December Serbia and Kosovo adopt the European Union's Integrated Border Management Agreed Conclusions to help normalize the situation.

5 December Security Council, by a vote of 13 in favour with 2 abstentions (China, Russia), reinforces sanctions regime against Eritrea (resolution 2023).

6 December Indonesia ratifies the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty.

9 December Ban Ki-moon visits Mogadishu, Somalia, in the first visit by a UN Secretary-General in over 18 years.

11 December Government of National Unity is sworn in Yemen.

12 December Assembly of States Parties to the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court elects Fatou B. Bensouda of Gambia as new Prosecutor.

17 December Leader of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK), Kim Jong Il, dies.

18 December Václav Havel, former President of Czecho-Slovakia and the Czech Republic, dies.

20 December United States completes the withdrawal of its military forces from Iraq.

2012

1 January Azerbaijan, Guatemala, Morocco, Pakistan and Togo start two-year term as elected Security Council members.

10 January Economic and Social Council elects Miloš Koterec of Slovakia as its President for the 2012 session.

13 January Myanmar releases political prisoners.

13 January Rauf Raif Denktaş, a long-serving and historic Turkish Cypriot leader, dies.

23 January UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Navi Pillay, expresses disappointment that the US Government has failed to close the Guantánamo Bay detention centre.

25 January	Ban Ki-moon presents *The Future We Want* to the General Assembly, his five-year action agenda.
4 February	Security Council fails to adopt draft resolution, due to negative votes of Russia and China, demanding Syria to implement the League of Arab States Peace Plan.
10 February	Sudan and South Sudan sign a Memorandum of Understanding on Non-Aggression and Cooperation in Addis Ababa.
16 February	General Assembly condemns, by a recorded vote of 137 in favour to 12 against, with 17 abstentions, human rights violations in Syria and calls to stop all violence.
23 February	Ban Ki-moon and Nabil Elaraby, Secretary-General of the League of Arab States (LAS), appoint former UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan as the UN-LAS Joint Special Envoy for Syria.
14 March	International Criminal Court (ICC) finds the former Congolese warlord, Thomas Lubanga Dyilo, guilty of war crimes, in the first verdict issued by the ICC Trial Chamber since it was established in 2002.
22 March	Elements of the Malian armed forces forcibly seize power from the democratically-elected Government of Mali.
27 March	Syria accepts six-point plan of Kofi Annan, the Joint Special Envoy for Syria, endorsed by the UN Security Council.
14 April	Security Council authorizes an advance team to monitor the ceasefire in Syria (resolution 2042).
17 April	Jim Yong Kim of the Republic of Korea is appointed as the President of the World Bank.
21 April	Security Council establishes UN Supervision Mission in Syria (UNSMIS) to monitor cessation of violence (resolution 2043).
26 April	Special Court for Sierra Leone delivers the trial judgment in the case against Charles Taylor, former President of Liberia.

20–21 May North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) Summit in Chicago.

24 May General Assembly re-appoints Navi Pillay as UN High Commissioner for Human Rights.

8 June General Assembly elects, voting by secret ballot for the first time in more than 20 years, Vuk Jeremić of Serbia, President of its sixty-seventh session. Jeremić receives 99 votes, the other candidate, Dalius Čekuolis of Lithuania, 85 votes of the 185 valid ballots cast.

16 June General Robert Mood of Norway, head of the UN Supervision Mission in Syria (UNSMIS), suspends UNSMIS's activities due to violence by armed elements.

16–17 June Mohamed Morsi is elected president of Egypt in run-off of presidential election.

20–22 June Rio+20, the UN Conference on Sustainable Development is held in Rio de Janeiro.

28 June International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia acquits Radovan Karadžić, the former Bosnian Serb leader, on one of two genocide charges, but upholds 10 other counts of the indictment.

1 July Rebels in Mali destroy mausoleums of Sidi Mahmoud, Sidi Moctar and Alpha Moya in the ancient city of Timbuktu.

2 July Jan Eliasson of Sweden is sworn in as UN Deputy Secretary-General.

3–26 July UN Conference on the Arms Trade Treaty in New York elaborates a legally binding instrument for the transfer of conventional arms but fails to find consensus.

5 July Security Council calls on Member States to undertake sanctions against groups in Mali that are linked to Al-Qaida (resolution 2056).

7 July Libya holds its first election in nearly half a century to the National Congress.

19 July Security Council fails to adopt a resolution extending the mandate of the UN Supervision

	Mission in Syria (UNSMIS) and threatening sanctions on Syria, by 11 votes in favour to 2 against (China, Russia) with 2 abstentions (Pakistan and South Africa).
20 July	Security Council extends the mandate of the UN Supervision Mission in Syria (UNSMIS) for a final 30 days (resolution 2059).
27 July–12 August	XXX Olympic Games are held in London, United Kingdom.
8 August	National Transitional Council in Libya transfers authority to the democratically elected General National Congress.
21 August	Somalia inaugurates its new Federal Parliament.
31 August	Kofi Annan resigns as the UN-League of Arab States Joint Special Envoy for Syria.
1 September	Lakhdar Brahimi of Algeria becomes the UN-League of Arab States Joint Special Representative for Syria.
11 September	Federal Parliament elects Hassan Sheikh Mohamud as President of Somalia, ending the eight-year political transition.
11 September	Attack against the US Consulate in Benghazi, Libya, results in the deaths of four US diplomats, including Ambassador John Christopher Stevens.
12 September	Ban Ki-moon appoints Tarek Mitri of Lebanon as Special Representative and Head of the UN Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL).
13 September	Ban Ki-moon appoints Jafar Javan of the United States as Director of the UN System Staff College (UNSSC).
17 September	Security Council extends the mandate of the UN Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) for one year (resolution 2066).
24 September	General Assembly holds the first-ever high-level meeting devoted to the rule of law at the national and international levels.
26 September	Security Council holds the high-level meeting on peace and security in the Middle East.

26 September	First-ever meeting of the UN and Pacific Islands Forum Leaders at UN Headquarters in New York.
27 September	Sudan and South Sudan sign agreements on security, the common border and economic relations.
8 October	Government of the Philippines and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) reach a framework peace agreement to end fighting in Mindanao, South Philippines.
12 October	European Union is awarded Nobel Peace Prize.
15 October	Cambodia's former monarch, King Norodom Sihanouk, dies.
18 October	General Assembly elects Argentina, Australia, Luxembourg, Republic of Korea and Rwanda as non-permanent members of the Security Council for 2013–2014.
29–31 October	Hurricane Sandy paralyses New York City and closes UN Headquarters for three days.
6 November	Barack Hussein Obama is re-elected as President of the United States.
13 November	General Assembly calls, by a recorded vote of 188 in favour to 3 against (United States, Israel, and Palau) with 2 abstentions (Marshall Islands, Micronesia), for an end to the US blockade against Cuba.
29 November	General Assembly accords Palestine non-Member Observer State status in the United Nations by a vote 138 in favour to 9 against (Canada, Czech Republic, Israel, Marshall Islands, Micronesia, Nauru, Panama, Palau, and United States), with 41 abstentions.
6 December	Oscar Niemeyer of Brazil, one of the original architects of UN Headquarters in New York, dies.
20 December	Security Council authorizes the deployment of an African-led mission to support efforts by national authorities to recover the north (resolution 2085).

21 December Renovation of the UN Secretariat Building in New York is completed.

2013

1 January Argentina, Australia, Luxembourg, Republic of Korea and Rwanda start two-year term as elected Security Council members.

2 January Ban Ki-moon appoints José Ramos-Horta of Timor-Leste as his Special Representative and Head of the UN Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Guinea-Bissau (UNIOGBIS).

4 January Prime Minister Hailemariam Desalegn of Ethiopia hosts summit meeting between President Omer Al-Bashir of Sudan and President Salva Kiir of South Sudan.

7 January Bahrain's Court of Cassation upholds the harsh sentences, including life imprisonment, against Bahraini political activists.

24 January Security Council extends the mandate of the UN Integrated Peacebuilding Office in the Central African Republic (BINUCA) (resolution 2088).

24 February Leaders of 11 African governments sign the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of Congo and the Region in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

12 February Democratic People's Republic of Korea conducts its third nuclear test.

1 March Ban Ki-moon appoints Ray Chambers of the United States as his Special Envoy for Malaria and for the Financing of the Health-Related Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

5 March Hugo Rafael Chávez Frías, President of Venezuela, dies.

6 March Radical militants of the Syrian opposition detain 21 Filipino peacekeepers of the UN Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF) in the Golan Heights.

8 March	Sudan and South Sudan sign the agreement on the establishment of the Safe Demilitarized Border Zone, the deployment of the Joint Border Verification and Monitoring Mechanism, and the activation of all security-related mechanisms.
13 March	Cardinal Jorge Mario Bergoglio of Buenos Aires, Argentina, elected by the conclave, takes the name Pope Francis.
15 March	National People's Congress elects Xi Jinping as President of the People's Republic of China.
18–28 March	UN Final Conference on the Arms Trade Treaty at UN Headquarters in New York concludes without adopting an arms trade treaty.
21 March	Ban Ki-moon establishes United Nations investigation on the possible use of chemical weapons in Syria.
22 March	Israel and Turkey restore diplomatic relations after Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's apology for the May 2010 flotilla incident.
24 March	Seleka coalition seizes power by force in the Central African Republic.
28 March	Security Council extends the mandate of the UN Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) and creates a specialized "intervention brigade" to disarm Congolese rebels and foreign armed groups (resolution 2098).
2 April	General Assembly adopts, by a vote of 154 in favour to 3 against (Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Iran, Syria), with 23 abstentions, the Arms Trade Treaty, a first-ever treaty to regulate conventional weapons trade.
8 April	Baroness Margaret Thatcher, the first female Prime Minister of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, dies.
9 April	Ban Ki-moon meets with Pope Francis at the Vatican.

12 April General Assembly re-appoints Helen Clark of New Zealand as Administrator of the UN Development Programme (UNDP).

25 April Security Council establishes the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) (resolution 2100).

2 May Security Council establishes the UN Assistance Mission in Somalia (UNSOM) for an initial period of 12 months (resolution 2102).

10 May Supreme Court of Guatemala finds former *de facto* Head of State, General Efraín Ríos Montt, guilty of genocide and crimes against humanity committed against Guatemala's Maya Ixil indigenous population. Guatemala becomes the first country in the world to convict a former Head of State for genocide in its own national court.

11 May Pakistan successfully conducts national and provincial elections, the first ever transition from one civilian Government to another in the country.

14 May Roberto Carvalho de Azevêdo of Brazil is appointed as Director-General of the World Trade Organization (WTO).

17 May General Assembly recognizes the Non-Self-Governing Territories status of French Polynesia.

31 May Ban Ki-moon appoints Sandra Honoré of Trinidad and Tobago as Special Representative and Head of the UN Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH).

3 June Arms Trade Treaty is opened for signature at the UN Headquarters in New York.

3 June UN Political Office for Somalia (UNPOS) completes its mandate.

6 June Austria withdraws its troops from the UN Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF).

8–9 June US President Barack Obama and Chinese President Xi Jinping holds a two-day summit in California.

9 June The *Guardian* reveals identity of Edward Snowden, whistleblower responsible for leaks about US surveillance programmes.

10 June Ban Ki-moon appoints Martin Kobler of Germany as Special Representative and Head of the UN Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo (MONUSCO).

10 June General Assembly appoints Mukhisa Kituyi of Kenya as Secretary-General of the UN Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD).

14 June General Assembly elects John William Ashe of Antigua and Barbuda as the President of its sixty-eight session.

14 June Hasan Rowhani wins in the presidential election in Iran.

18 June Ban Ki-moon appoints Major General Michael Finn of Ireland as the Head of Mission and Chief of Staff of the UN Truce Supervision Organization (UNTSO).

18 June Government of Mali, the National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad and the High Council for the Unity of Azawad sign an agreement in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso, providing for an immediate ceasefire and presidential elections.

27 June Security Council removes Iraq from its obligations concerning the return of Kuwaiti and third-State nationals or their remains and their property seized during Iraq's 1990 invasion of Kuwait (resolution 2107).

1 July The Hague branch of the International Residual Mechanism for Criminal Tribunals for Rwanda and the former Yugoslavia, established by the Security Council resolution 1966 (2010), begins its operations.

1 July African-led International Support Mission to Mali (AFISMA) transfers authority to the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) in Bamako.

3 July *Coup d'état* in Egypt. Egyptian army suspends the Constitution and appoints the head of the constitutional court as Interim Head of State, deposing President Mohamed Morsi.

13 July Seven Tanzanian peacekeepers die in an attack against African Union-UN Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID).

24 July General Assembly designates 19 November as World Toilet Day.

29 July US Secretary of State John Kerry announces the resumption of direct talks between Israelis and Palestinians to begin final status negotiations to achieve a negotiated two-State solution within the agreed timeframe of nine months.

1 August Ban Ki-moon appoints Speciosa Wandira-Kasibwe of Uganda as Special Envoy for HIV/AIDS in Africa.

7 August Ban Ki-moon appoints Miguel de Serpa Soares of Portugal as UN Under-Secretary-General for Legal Affairs and UN Legal Counsel.

14 August Syria formally accepts the modalities of cooperation to ensure the conduct of the Mission to Investigate Allegations of the Use of Chemical Weapons led by Åke Sellström of Sweden.

21 August Reports of allegations on the use of chemical weapons in the Ghouta area of Damascus, Syria, resulting in numerous casualties, particularly among civilians.

28 August Ban Ki-moon attends the ceremony marking the centennial of the Peace Palace in The Hague, where he calls for the world to give diplomacy a chance in Syria.

14 September Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov of Russia and US Secretary of State John Kerry reach an understanding regarding the safeguarding and destruction of Syria's chemical weapons stockpiles.

14 September Syria accedes to the 1992 Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on their Destruction.

17 September Ban Ki-moon presents the report on the incident in the Ghouta area of Damascus (21 August),

	confirming use of chemical weapons on a relatively large scale.
20 September	UN Commission on Sustainable Development concludes its two decades of efforts to promote sustainability.
21 September	Terrorist attack at a shopping mall in Nairobi, Kenya, causes numerous deaths and injuries.
25 September	United States, the largest arms exporting country in the world, signs the Arms Trade Treaty committing itself to a global regulation of the arms trade.
26 September	Security Council adopts, by a vote of 14 in favour with one abstention (Russia), its first-ever resolution dedicated exclusively to the issue of small arms and light weapons, reminding Member States to comply with Council-mandated arms embargoes (resolution 2117).
26 September	Appeals Chamber of the Special Court for Sierra Leone (SCSL) confirms the conviction of Charles Taylor, former President of Liberia, for aiding, abetting and planning war crimes and crimes against humanity.
27 September	Security Council endorses the expeditious destruction of Syria's chemical weapons programme and calls for the full implementation of the 27 September decision of the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) (resolution 2118).
2 October	More than 100 migrants are killed and hundreds more missing after their boat catches fire and capsizes off the coast of Lampedusa, Italy.
7 October	Ban Ki-moon proposes the establishment of a joint mission of the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) and the United Nations to achieve the timely elimination of the Syrian chemical weapons programme.
7–8 October	High-level Dialogue on Financing for Development at the General Assembly.

10 October Security Council reinforces the UN Integrated Peacebuilding Office in the Central African Republic (resolution 2121).

11 October Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) is awarded the Nobel Peace Prize.

16 October Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW)-UN Joint Mission in Syria is established.

16 October Ban Ki-moon appoints Sigrid Kaag of the Netherlands as Special Coordinator of the OPCW-UN Joint Mission.

17 October General Assembly elects Chad, Chile, Lithuania, Nigeria and Saudi Arabia as non-permanent members of the Security Council for 2014–2015.

18 October Saudi Arabia declines to accept the seat on the Security Council.

21 October General Assembly endorses the construction of a permanent memorial to the victims of slavery and the transatlantic slave trade at UN Headquarters.

28 October Ban Ki-moon designates the world-renowned pianist Lang Lang of China as UN Messenger of Peace.

29 October Israel decides to participate in the Human Rights Council's universal periodic review in Geneva, after a year and half of abstention.

29 October General Assembly calls, by a recorded vote of 188 in favour to 2 against (United States and Israel) with 3 abstentions (Marshall Islands, Micronesia, and Palau), for an end to the US embargo against Cuba.

29 October Security Council holds an open debate on its working methods, transparency and accountability, hearing calls to limit the veto in mass atrocity situations.

1 November Ban Ki-moon starts a joint visit to the Sahel region with the World Bank, the African Union, the European Union and the African Development Bank.

5 November	Ban Ki-moon appoints Michael Møller of Denmark as Acting Head of the UN Office in Geneva.
11–23 November	Nineteenth session of the Conference of the Parties (COP-19) to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) in Warsaw.
12 November	Irina Bokova of Bulgaria is re-elected as Director-General of the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO).
12 November	Security Council extends the mandate of the European Union multinational stabilization force (EUFOR ALTHEA) in Bosnia and Herzegovina (resolution 2123).
12 November	Saudi Arabia informs Ban Ki-moon that it will not take its seat on the Security Council.
15 November	Security Council declines a one-year delay in International Criminal Court proceedings against the President and Deputy President of Kenya, by a vote of 7 in favour (Azerbaijan, China, Morocco, Pakistan, Russia, Rwanda, and Togo), none against, and 8 abstentions (Argentina, Australia, France, Guatemala, Luxembourg, Republic of Korea, United Kingdom, and United States), lacking the requisite nine affirmative votes.
15 November	Former President of Cyprus Glafcos Clerides dies.
18 November	Ban Ki-moon visits Auschwitz-Birkenau concentration camp.
20 November	Ban Ki-moon appoints Pierre Krähenbühl of Switzerland as Commissioner-General of the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA).
24 November	United States, United Kingdom, Russia, France, China and Germany (P5+1) and Iran reach an interim agreement regarding Iran's nuclear programme in Geneva.

28–29 November Ukraine, Moldova, Georgia, Azerbaijan, Armenia and Belarus, meet at the Eastern European summit in Vilnius, during Lithuanian presidency of the Council of Europe.

5 December Nelson Mandela, former President of South Africa, dies.

5 December Security Council authorizes both the deployment of the African-led International Support Mission in the Central African Republic (CAR), known as MISCA, and the French troops already stationed in the CAR (resolution 2127).

6 December General Assembly elects Jordan as non-permanent member of the Security Council for 2014–2015.

11 December *Time* magazine selects Pope Francis as the Man of the Year.

12 December Ban Ki-moon receives the final report of the UN Mission to Investigate Allegations of the Use of Chemical Weapons in Syria.

18 December General Assembly adopts, without a vote, resolution proposed by Germany and Brazil on the right to privacy in the digital age, calling for an end to excessive electronic spying.

2014

1 January Chad, Chile, Jordan, Lithuania and Nigeria start two-year term as elected Security Council members.

15 January Investor Summit on Climate Risk in New York brings together more than 550 global financial leaders to discuss ways to close the gap in clean energy investment.

16 January Special Tribunal for Lebanon opens the trial of those responsible for the assassination of former Prime Minister Rafiq Hariri and 21 others.

16 January UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Navi Pillay, warns armed opposition groups in Syria of possible violations of international

	human rights and humanitarian law, and war crimes.
16 January	Bank Ki-moon launches the International Year of Solidarity with the Palestinian People.
20 January	Catherine Samba Panza is elected as Head of State of the Transition of the Central African Republic.
22 January	Ban Ki-moon announces members of Central African Republic Commission of Inquiry to investigate events since 1 January 2013 as requested by the Security Council.
22 January	Ban Ki-moon opens the high-level segment of the Geneva Conference on Syria (Geneva II), in Montreux, Switzerland.
23 January	Government of South Sudan and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army (SPLM/A) in opposition sign the agreement on cessation of hostilities in Addis Ababa.
24 January	Intra-Syrian talks of the Geneva Conference on Syria opens in Geneva.
25 January	Government of the Philippines and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front sign the last of the four annexes to the "Government of the Philippines-Moro Islamic Liberation Front Framework Agreement on the Bangsamoro" of 2012, paving the way for the signing of the Comprehensive Agreement on the Bangsamoro.
26 January	Tunisia adopts a new Constitution, marking its democratic transition.
28 January	Security Council extends the mandate of the UN Integrated Peacebuilding Office in the Central African Republic (BINUCA) (resolution 2134).
6 February	Ban Ki-moon addresses the International Olympic Committee session, the first UN Secretary-General to do so.
7–23 February	XXII Olympic Winter Games in Sochi, Russia.
11 February	Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot leaders relaunch negotiations aimed at reaching a comprehensive settlement of the Cyprus problem.

11 February	Representatives of China and Taiwan meet in Nanjing and agree, for the first time since the revolution of 1949, to set up representative offices.
12 February	Republic of Korea and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea hold high-level governmental talks in Panmunjeom at the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ).
14 February	Security Council adopts its first-ever presidential statement on cooperation between the United Nations and the European Union.
20–25 February	Democratic People's Republic of Korea and the Republic of Korea hold family reunions at Mount Kumgang.
22 February	Security Council demands all parties in Syria to allow delivery of humanitarian assistance, cease attacks against civilians and lift the siege of populated areas (resolution 2139).
24 February	Ban Ki-moon launches the International Year for Small Island Developing States.
1 March	Security Council meets in an emergency meeting to consider the situation in Ukraine.
5 March	Ban Ki-moon closes the UN Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Sierra Leone (UNIPSIL).
7 March	General Assembly re-elects Achim Steiner of Germany as Executive Director of the UN Environment Programme (UNEP).
7 March	General Assembly includes item "Investigation into the conditions and circumstances resulting in the tragic death of Dag Hammarskjöld and of the members of the party accompanying him" to the agenda of its current session.
7 March	Security Council unanimously condemns child recruitment in armed conflict (resolution 2143).
7 March	International Criminal Court convicts Germain Katanga, on four counts of war crimes committed in 2003 in the Ituri district of the Democratic Republic of Congo.

11 March Autonomous Republic of Crimea proclaims independence from Ukraine.

15 March Security Council fails to adopt a draft resolution, by a vote of 13 in favour to 1 against (Russia) and 1 abstention (China), urging Member States not to recognize the results of the planned referendum on Ukraine's autonomous Crimea region.

16 March Voters in the referendum in Crimea and Sevastopol vote overwhelmingly to break with Ukraine and join Russia.

17 March Security Council extends the mandate of the UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) until 17 March 2015 (resolution 2145).

18 March Russian President Vladimir Putin signs into law the accession of Crimea and Sevastopol to the Russian Federation.

18 March UN Mission in the Republic of South Sudan (UNMISS) suspends its current activities and re-focuses on protection of civilians and supporting the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) mediation process.

19 March Security Council bans illicit crude oil exports from Libya and authorizes States to inspect vessels on the high seas, using all measures commensurate to the specific circumstances (resolution 2146).

27 March General Assembly, by a recorded vote of 100 in favour, 11 against and 58 abstentions, calls on States, international organizations and specialized agencies not to recognize any change in the status of Crimea or the Black Sea port city of Sevastopol.

10 April Security Council establishes a new peacekeeping mission for the Central African Republic and decides to transfer authority from the African-led International Support Mission in the Central African Republic (MISCA) to the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization

Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA) (resolution 2149).

14 April Boko Haram abducts 276 schoolgirls in Chibok, Borno State, north-eastern Nigeria.

16 April Security Council holds an open official meeting to mark the twentieth commemoration of the genocide in Rwanda.

16 April Security Council condemns without reservation any denial of the genocide and calls upon States to recommit to prevent and fight against genocide and other serious crimes under international law (resolution 2150).

23 April Kosovo agrees to establish an international war crimes court to investigate the allegations raised by the 2011 Dick Marty report about organ trafficking by the KLA (Kosovo Liberation Army).

30 April Iraq holds nation-wide Council of Representatives elections and Governorate Council elections in the Kurdistan region.

6 May Nuclear-weapon States sign the Protocol to the Treaty on a Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone in Central Asia, committing them to respect the application of the Treaty in Central Asia, as well as not to use or threaten to use nuclear weapons against the parties to the Treaty.

8 May Security Council creates the Captain Mbaye Diagne Medal for Exceptional Courage, to be awarded to UN or associated personnel (resolution 2154).

9 May President Salva Kiir and former Vice-President Riek Machar sign an Agreement to Resolve the Crisis in South Sudan.

20 May Army declares martial law in Thailand.

22 May Security Council declines, by a vote of 13 in favour to 2 against (China and Russia), to refer the situation in Syria to the International Criminal Court.

22 May Security Council's Al-Qaida Sanctions Committee adds Boko Haram to its list of

	entities subject to the targeted financial sanctions and the arms embargo set out in Security Council (resolution 2083).
22 May	Military takes control in Thailand, imposing martial law and suspending the Constitution.
24 May	Diego Cordovez, former Foreign Minister of Ecuador and former senior UN official, dies.
25 May	Presidential election in Ukraine, with 60% of eligible voter turnout, elects Petro Poroshenko.
26–28 May	Presidential elections in Egypt.
29 May	Ban Ki-moon posthumously awards the Dag Hammarskjöld medal to 106 UN peacekeepers who died while serving under the United Nations flag in 2013.
31 May	Lakhdar Brahimi ends his mission as the UN-League of Arab States Joint Special Representative for Syria.
31 May	Taliban releases the sole US detainee Sgt. Bowe Bergdahl in a swap deal for five detainees from Guantánamo Bay Detention Centre in Cuba.
3 June	Australia, Austria, Belgium, Burkina Faso, Jamaica, Luxembourg, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines and Samoa jointly deposit their respective instruments of ratification of the Arms Trade Treaty at the UN Headquarters in New York, bringing the number of ratifications to 40.
5 June	General Assembly, by a recorded vote of 69 in favour to 13 against, with 79 abstentions, recognizes the right of all internally displaced persons, refugees and their descendants to return to their homes throughout Georgia, including Abkhazia and the Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia.
6 June	General Assembly establishes the UN Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela Prize, an honorary award given to individuals exhibiting outstanding achievements and contributions to the purposes and principles of the United Nations.
8 June	Pope Francis, President Peres of Israel and President Abbas of the Palestinian Authority meet and pray for peace at the Vatican.

11 June General Assembly elects Sam Kutesa of Uganda President of its sixty-ninth session.

16 June General Assembly appoints Zeid Ra'ad Zeid Al-Hussein of Jordan as UN High Commissioner for Human Rights.

18 June Death toll from an outbreak of Ebola in Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone hits 337 according to the World Health Organization (WHO).

19 June Felipe VI is coronated as King of Spain.

20 June UN refugee agency (UNHCR) informs that the number of refugees, asylum seekers and internally displaced people worldwide exceeds 50 million people, for the first time since World War II.

23 June Joint Mission of the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) and the UN confirms destruction or removal of the total of declared chemical weapons in Syria.

27 June President Petro Poroshenko signs the Association Agreement between the European Union and Ukraine.

30 June Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIS/ISIL) declares an Islamic caliphate in the parts of Iraq and Syria it controls.

2–3 July World Health Organization convenes a special ministerial summit of 11 African countries and partners involved in the Ebola outbreak response in Accra, Ghana.

3 July General Assembly approves financial arrangements for 12 UN peacekeeping operations and authorizes the first increase in reimbursement rates for troop-contributing countries in more than a decade.

7 July Eduard Shevardnadze, former President of Georgia and former Foreign Minister of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, dies.

7 July Israel Defense Forces commence operation Protective Edge in the Gaza Strip, with the stated objective of stopping the rocket attacks by

	Hamas and destroying its capabilities to conduct operations against Israel.
10 July	Ban Ki-moon appoints Staffan de Mistura of Sweden as Special Envoy for Syria.
14 July	Security Council authorizes relief delivery across conflict lines in Syria for 180 days (resolution 2165).
14 July	Ban Ki-moon appoints Mary Robinson of Ireland as Special Envoy for Climate Change.
17 July	Israel launches a ground operation in the Gaza Strip.
17 July	Malaysia Airlines Flight MH17 from Amsterdam to Kuala Lumpur is downed over eastern Ukraine killing all 298 passengers and crew on board.
21 July	Security Council deplores the downing of Malaysian Airlines flight MH17 in eastern Ukraine on 17 July and calls for an independent international investigation and an immediate halt to military activities in the area (resolution 2166).
1 August	Margaret Chan of China, Director-General of the World Health Organization (WHO), confirms unprecedented scale of the Ebola outbreak in West Africa with 1603 cases, including 887 deaths, in Guinea, Liberia, Nigeria and Sierra Leone, since March 2014.
7 August	Trial Chamber of the Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia (ECCC) finds two former Khmer Rouge leaders—Nuon Chea and Khieu Samphan—guilty of crimes against humanity and sentences them to life in prison.
8 August	World Health Organization officially declares the current Ebola outbreak in West Africa a Public Health Emergency of International Concern. This declaration is a legally binding instrument for all Member States on disease prevention, surveillance, control and response.
12 August	Ban Ki-moon appoints David Nabarro as Senior UN System Coordinator on Ebola virus disease.

18 August	US President Obama welcomes the destruction of Syria's declared chemical weapons stockpile on board the US Maritime Vessel Cape Ray several weeks ahead of schedule.
20 August	Oman becomes the 162nd State to join the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention.
27 August	Security Council calls on all parties in Libya to agree to an immediate ceasefire and an end to the fighting (resolution 2174).
16 September	Ban Ki-moon designates US actor Leonardo DiCaprio as UN Messenger of Peace.
18 September	Scotland votes to stay in the United Kingdom in the referendum with 55.3% voting against independence and 44.7% voting in its favour.
18 September	Security Council unanimously determines that the Ebola outbreak in Africa constitutes a threat to international peace and security adopts (resolution 2177).
19 September	General Assembly approves Secretary-General's proposal to establish the UN Mission for Ebola Emergency Response (UNMEER).
21 September	Ashraf Ghani and Abdullah Abdullah, two leading presidential candidates in Afghanistan, sign an agreement to establish a Government of National Unity.
22 September	United Nations holds historic, first-ever World Conference on Indigenous Peoples.
23 September	World Climate Summit at the UN Headquarters.
24 September	Security Council, at a summit presided over by US President Barack Obama, calls on all States to cooperate urgently on preventing the international flow of terrorist fighters to and from conflict zones (resolution 2178).
25 September	Arms Trade Treaty receives the 50 ratifications needed to enter into force.
30 September	Joint Mission of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) and the UN to eliminate chemical weapons programme of Syria ends its activities.

10 October Malala Yousafzai of Pakistan and Kailash Satyarthi of India are awarded the Nobel Peace Prize.

14 October Noam Chomsky, Professor Emeritus of Linguistics at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in Boston, United States, gives a lecture to the UN Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People.

16 October General Assembly elects Angola, Malaysia, Venezuela, New Zealand and Spain as non-permanent members of the Security Council for 2015–2016.

20 October World Health Organization (WHO) officially declares Nigeria free of Ebola virus transmission, after 42 days without a single case.

28 October General Assembly, by a recorded vote of 188 votes in favour, two votes against (United States and Israel), and three abstentions (Marshall Islands, Micronesia, and Palau), calls for an end to the United States economic, commercial and financial embargo on Cuba.

31 October Ban Ki-moon appoints a High-Level Independent Panel on Peace Operations, chaired by José Ramos-Horta of Timor-Leste.

10 November Ban Ki-moon establishes an internal and independent UN Headquarters Board of Inquiry into certain incidents that occurred in the Gaza Strip between 8 July and 26 August 2014.

25 November Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, notes the violent protests in Ferguson, Missouri, following the decision by a grand jury there not to charge a police officer in the fatal shooting of a young African American man.

5 December International Criminal Court (ICC) dismisses the case against Uhuru Kenyatta of Kenya.

9 December United States Senate Select Committee on Intelligence releases report on the CIA's detention and interrogation program, which

documents the extensive use of torture and other gross and systematic human rights violations.

12 December Security Council unanimously welcomes the agreement between the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and the Afghan Government to establish a post-2014 non-combat mission in Afghanistan (resolution 2189).

17 December Presidents Barack Obama and Raul Castro announce the restoration of full relations between the United States and Cuba. President Obama announces the United States will end an outdated approach to Cuba that has failed to advance US interests and will begin to normalize relations between the two countries.

23 December Ukrainian parliament approves a law cancelling the non-aligned status of the country.

24 December Arms Trade Treaty enters into force.

30 December Security Council fails to adopt a draft resolution calling for Israel, within three years, to withdraw from Palestinian territory occupied since 1967 and, within one year, for the parties to reach a negotiated solution to the conflict. The draft obtains 8 votes in favour (Argentina, Chad, Chile, China, France, Jordan, Luxembourg, and Russia), 2 votes against (United States and Australia) and 5 abstentions (United Kingdom, Nigeria, Republic of Korea, Rwanda, and Lithuania).

2015

1 January UN Electoral Observation Mission in Burundi (MENUB) officially starts work as mandated by Security Council resolution 2137 (2014).

7 January Terrorist attack against the headquarters of French newspaper *Charlie Hebdo*, in Paris, France, causes numerous deaths among journalists, media professionals and associated personnel.

12 January	Ban Ki-moon launches UN@70 with Nobel Laureate Kilash Satyarthi and UN goodwill ambassadors in New Delhi, India.
21 January	Deputy Secretary-General, Jan Eliasson, speaks at a special event to mark the seventieth anniversary of the liberation of the Auschwitz-Birkenau Nazi death camp.
22 January	President Abd Rabbo Mansour Hadi and Prime Minister Khaled Bahah submit their resignations in Yemen.
22 January	King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz al-Saud of Saudi Arabia dies.
22 January	Ban Ki-moon nominates Anis Bajwa of Pakistan; Saraswathi Menon of India; Funmi Olonisakin of Nigeria; Ahmedou Ould-Abdallah of Mauritania; Charles Petrie of France; Gert Rosenthal of Guatemala; and Edith Grace Ssempala of Uganda, to form an Advisory Group on the review of the peacebuilding architecture.
2 February	World Meteorological Organization (WMO) reports that 2014 was the hottest year on record.
2 February	General Assembly extends the terms of office of UN High Commissioner for Refugees, António Manuel de Oliveira Guterres of Portugal, until the end of 2015.
3 February	International Court of Justice (ICJ) rules that neither Croatia nor Serbia committed genocide against each other's populations during the 1990s wars in the former Yugoslavia.
12 February	Security Council unanimously condemns any trade with the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL or Da'esh), the Al-Nusrah Front and other entities designated to be associated with Al-Qaida (resolution 2199).
11–12 February	Leaders of Russia, Ukraine, France and Germany sign in Minsk, Belarus, a package of measures for the implementation of the Minsk accords of September 2014.

12 February	Egyptian authorities release the detained journalists Mohamed Fahmy and Baher Mohamed of Al-Jazeera.
15 February	Security Council demands that Houthi rebels in Yemen withdraw from Government institutions, release President Abd Rabbuh Mansur Hadi and engage in UN-brokered negotiations on a path towards democratic transition (resolution 2201).
15 February	Security Council strongly condemns murder in Libya of 21 Egyptian Coptic Christians by an affiliate of the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Da'esh).
15 February	Ceasefire commences in eastern Ukraine, based on the Minsk accords.
24 February	Ban Ki-moon appoints Ján Kubiš of Slovakia as Special Representative for Iraq and Head of the UN Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI).
5 March	Security Council, unanimously adopts resolution 2208 (2015), extending the mandate of the UN Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL) for a further two weeks, until 31 March.
6 March	Security Council condemns, by a vote of 14 in favour, zero against, and 1 abstention (Venezuela), in the strongest terms any use of chlorine as a weapon in Syria (resolution 2209).
9 March	Federica Mogherini, High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, addresses the Security Council debate on a partnership between the UN and the European Union.
9 March	Ban Ki-moon appoints Stephen O'Brien of the United Kingdom as UN Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator.
12 March	International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) appoints Fang Liu of China as its Secretary-General, the first-ever woman to be

	appointed at the head of the UN specialized agency dealing with civil aviation.
14–18 March	Third World Conference for Disaster Risk Reduction in Sendai, Japan, adopts the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030, to reduce risk for loss of life, livelihood and critical infrastructure from disasters, through enhanced national planning and international cooperation.
16 March	Ban Ki-moon appoints Mohamed Chande Othman of Tanzania, Kerryn Macaulay of Australia and Henrik Larsen of Denmark, as members of the Independent Panel of Experts to examine the probative value of new information related to the tragic death, in September 1961, of Dag Hammarskjöld and the party accompanying him.
21 March	Republic of Korea hosts the seventh Republic of Korea-Japan-China Trilateral Foreign Ministers' Meeting in Seoul to reinforce the trilateral cooperation mechanism.
22 March	Lee Kuan Yew, former Prime Minister of the Republic of Singapore, dies.
25 March	Ban Ki-moon unveils The Ark of Return, a permanent memorial to honour the victims of slavery and the transatlantic slave trade, at the UN Headquarters in New York.
26 March	Saudi Arabia announces the start of military operations in Yemen, supported by the Gulf Cooperation Council members, at the request of its Government.
27 March	First-ever Chiefs of Defence Conference brings together chiefs of defence and senior military officials from more than 100 Member States to discuss issues central to UN peacekeeping.
31 March	Government of Myanmar and 16 ethnic armed groups reach ceasefire agreement after more than 60 years of conflict.

10–11 April	Seventh Summit of the Americas in Panama includes Cuba.
14 April	Security Council demands that all parties in Yemen immediately end violence and refrain from actions threatening the political transition. By 14 affirmative votes with one abstention (Russia), the Council demands that the Houthis, withdraw from all areas seized during the latest conflict and fully implement previous Council resolutions (resolution 2216).
9 May	Ban Ki-moon visits Moscow for the celebration of Victory Day.
9 May	World Health Organization (WHO) officially declares Liberia free of Ebola virus transmission,
15 May	Government of Mali and the Plateforme coalition of armed groups sign the Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in Mali in Bamako.
22 May	States Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) conclude the 2015 Review Conference without an outcome text, due to the disagreement over a conference on establishing a nuclear weapons free zone in the Middle East, opposed by Canada, US, and UK.
22 May	Security Council urges stronger cooperation in stemming the illicit transfer of small arms and light weapons, by a vote of 9 in favour, none against and the abstentions of Angola, Chad, China, Nigeria, Russia, and Venezuela (resolution 2220).
22 May	Security Council strongly condemns the ongoing barbaric terrorist acts by the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Da'esh) in Syria, including its violent takeover of Palmyra.
28 May	General Assembly unanimously adopts resolution on saving the cultural heritage of Iraq, condemning the destruction of the cultural heritage of Iraq by the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL).

1 June Government of Canada releases the final report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission on the Indian residential schools' human rights violations.

12 June Independent Panel of Experts to examine new information relating to the tragic death of the former Secretary-General Dag Hammarskjöld submits its report.

15 June General Assembly elects by acclamation Mogens Lykketoft of Denmark, as President of its seventieth session.

18 June 2015 Pope Francis releases encyclical letter *Laudato Sí* on climate change, environment and social justice.

25 June General Assembly authorizes $8.3 billion for 15 UN peacekeeping operations in 2015–2016.

7 July Government of Afghanistan and Taliban representatives hold direct talks in Muree, Pakistan, as a step towards peace and reconciliation.

8 July Security Council fails to adopt a resolution emphasizing acceptance of genocide as a prerequisite for national reconciliation in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The draft resolution receives 10 affirmative votes, four abstentions (China, Venezuela, Angola, and Nigeria), and a negative vote from Russia opposing selective approach to commemorating or forgetting of some anniversaries (My Lai, Invasion of Iraq).

20 July United States and Cuba resume normal relations, as both countries reopen embassies in Havana and Washington, DC.

14 July P5+1 countries and Iran reach in Vienna an agreement on a Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) on Iran's nuclear programme.

20 July Security Council unanimously adopts resolution 2231 on a Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) on Iran's nuclear programme. The resolution provides for the eventual removal of all nuclear-related sanctions against Iran and

	guarantees that the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) will continue to verify Iran's compliance.
29 July	Security Council fails to establish an international tribunal for the downing of Malaysia Airlines flight MH17 on 17 July 2014 in Ukraine. The draft resolution receives 11 affirmative votes, three abstentions (Angola, China, and Venezuela) and one negative vote (Russia).
31 July	UN Mission for Ebola Emergency Response (UNMEER) closes its operations.
1 September	General Assembly adopts a resolution transmitting to its seventieth session a sweeping post-2015 development agenda aimed at eliminating poverty and hunger, protecting the planet and fostering peace.
3 September	Ban Ki-moon attends commemorative events in Beijing, marking the seventieth anniversary of the Second World War end.
10 September	Security Council extends the UN Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL) until 15 March 2016, unanimously adopting resolution 2238 (2015).
10 September	General Assembly decides, by a recorded vote of 119 in favour to 8 against (Australia, Canada, Israel, Marshall Islands, Micronesia, Palau, Tuvalu, and United States), with 45 abstentions, that the flags of non-member observer States maintaining permanent observer missions at UN Headquarters shall be raised at Headquarters and UN offices.
25 September	Pope Francis gives address to the UN General Assembly.
25 September	World leaders adopt Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) at the UN Sustainable Development Summit in New York.
2 October	Somalia ratifies the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the most widely ratified human rights convention, with 196 State parties. The

United States remains the only State to ratify the Convention to reach the objective of universal ratification.

3 October Ban Ki-moon strongly condemns the NATO airstrikes in Kunduz, Afghanistan, causing the death and injury of medical workers and patients at a *Médecins sans Frontières* hospital.

5 October Director-General of the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) condemns the destruction of the Arch of Triumph in Palmyra, Syria, 2000-year-old monument inscribed on UNESCO's World Heritage List, by armed opposition.

9 October Tunisian National Dialogue Quartet is awarded the Nobel Prize for Peace.

15 October General Assembly elects Egypt, Japan, Senegal, Ukraine, and Uruguay as non-permanent members of the Security Council for 2016–2017.

20–26 October Republic of Korea and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea hold family reunions at Mount Kumgang.

23 October General Assembly adopts Declaration on the occasion of the seventieth anniversary of the United Nations recommitting Member States to refrain in their international relations from the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any State, or in any other manner inconsistent with the Organization's purposes.

24 October More than 160 landmarks in nearly 50 countries across the world light up in UN blue, as part of a global campaign "Turn the World UN Blue," for the UN's 70th anniversary commemoration.

27 October General Assembly calls to end the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States of America against Cuba, with 191 countries voting in favour and the United States and Israel voting against.

7 November World Health Organization announces the end of Ebola transmission in Sierra Leone.

13 November Terrorist attacks in several places in Paris cause numerous deaths and injuries among civilians.

18 November General Assembly elects Filippo Grandi of Italy as UN High Commissioner for Refugees.

20 November Security Council determines that the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant/Sham (ISIL/ISIS) constitutes an unprecedented threat to international peace and security, calling upon Member States to suppress its terrorist acts on territory under its control in Syria and Iraq (resolution 2249).

30 November–12 December At Twenty-first Conference of the Parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP21) in Paris, for the first time, every country in the world pledges to curb its emissions to address climate change.

9 December Security Council urges Member States to consider ways to give youth a greater voice in decision-making at the local, national, regional and international levels (resolution 2250), the first resolution of its kind on youth, peace and security.

15 December Presidents of the General Assembly and the Security Council send a letter to the Member States to present their candidate for the next UN Secretary-General.

17 December Security Council expands and strengthens its sanctions on Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Da'esh) in an unprecedented meeting of finance ministers from around the world (resolution 2253).

18 December Security Council endorses a road map for a peace process in Syria, setting out a timetable for UN-facilitated talks between the Government and opposition (resolution 2254).

21 December Security Council adjusts its sanctions regime against the Taliban—clarifying exemptions to travel bans and asset freezes to be determined on a case-by-case basis (resolution 2255).

23 December Security Council welcomes the 17 December signing of the Libyan Political Agreement to form a Government of National Accord and calls on its new Presidency Council to form that Government within 30 days (resolution 2259).

29 December World Health Organization announces the end of Ebola transmission in Guinea.

31 December International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR) ends its operations.

2016

1 January Egypt, Japan, Senegal, Ukraine, and Uruguay start two-year term as elected Security Council members.

2 January Saudi Arabia announces execution of 47 people, including the opposition cleric Sheikh Nimr Baqir al-Nimr. The executions spark attacks on Saudi Arabia's embassy in Tehran, and its Consulate General in Mashhad.

5 January Ban Ki-moon appoints Karen AbuZayd of the United States as Special Adviser on the Summit on Addressing Large Movements of Refugees and Migrants in September 2016.

6 January Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) conducts underground nuclear test. Security Council condemns the test as a clear violation of its resolutions 1718 (2006), 1874 (2009), 2087 (2013), and 2094 (2013).

7 January Ban Ki-moon appoints Parfait Onanga-Anyanga of Gabon as Special Representative for the Central African Republic and Head of the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA).

13 January Iran releases ten American sailors who were seized in Iranian territorial waters.

14 January World Health Organization announces the end of Ebola transmission in Liberia, ending the Ebola outbreak in West Africa.

19 January Ban Ki-moon appoints a group of eminent Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) Advocates to help promote action to achieve the SDGs.

19 January Government and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia-People's Army (FARC-EP) issue the joint communiqué in Havana requesting the Security Council to establish a political mission in Colombia to monitor and verify a future agreement on a bilateral and definitive ceasefire and cessation of hostilities.

21 January At least 51 UN and associated personnel (27 peacekeepers and 24 civilians) were killed in 2015 in the line of duty, according to the Standing Committee for the Security and Independence of the International Civil Service of the UN Staff Union.

21 January Ban Ki-moon announces the first members of the High-level Advisory Group for Every Woman Every Child to inspire actions for women's, children's and adolescents' health in the universal Sustainable Development Goals agenda.

22 January Deputy Secretary-General, Jan Eliasson, speaks at the commemoration of the seventieth anniversary of the Economic and Social Council.

22 January National Institute of Building Sciences, based in Washington, DC, bestows an Honor Award in the High-Performance Buildings category from the Sustainable Buildings Industry Council to the Capital Master Plan for the renovation of the UN Headquarters.

25–28 January	United Nations holds a series of events in observance of the International Day of Commemoration in memory of the victims of the Holocaust, including a screening of the acclaimed film "Woman in Gold."
25 January	Security Council creates a special mission to monitor the disarmament process between Columbia and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia–People's Army (FARC-EP) to end the longest civil war in Latin America (resolution 2261).
27 January	Security Council extends the arms embargo, asset freeze and travel ban imposed on the Central African Republic (resolution 2262).
28 January	Security Council extends the mandate of the UN Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus (UNFICYP) for six months (resolution 2263).
29 January	Intra-Syrian Talks, the proximity talks led by the UN Special Envoy for Syria, Staffan de Mistura, start in Geneva.
1 February	World Health Organization (WHO) declares that microcephaly and other neurological disorders associated with the Zika virus constitute a Public Health Emergency of International Concern.
3 February	Ban Ki-moon receives an honorary doctorate at Cambridge University.
5 February	UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention (WGAD) announces the detention of Julian Assange is unlawful and the United Kingdom and Sweden must immediately release and compensate him.
5 February	UN Postal Administration issues, for the first time, a set of six new UN postage stamps promoting equality for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people.
12 February	First-ever all-female formed Police Unit deployed to a UN peacekeeping operation ends its mission in Liberia after nine years and returns to India.

15 February	Fiji becomes the first country to ratify the Paris climate agreement, ahead of a signing ceremony in April in New York.
16 February	Boutros Boutros-Ghali, UN Secretary-General from 1992 to 1996, dies.
21 February	Terrorist attacks in Homs and Damascus, Syria, for which Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Da'esh) claims responsibility, kill more than 130 people.
22 February	US Secretary of State John Kerry and Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov, Co-chairs of the International Syria Support Group Ceasefire Task Force, announce the cessation of hostilities agreement will come into effect in Syria on 27 February.
26 February	Security Council endorses the cessation of hostilities in Syria announced by the United States and Russia, Co-chairs of the International Syria Support Group.
27 February	Nationwide cessation of hostilities goes into effect across Syria.
1 March	Ban Ki-moon inaugurates the newly renovated Russian Salon, at the Palais des Nations in Geneva, in the presence of Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov.
2 March	Security Council imposes fresh sanctions on the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK), following its recent nuclear test (resolution 2270).
7 March	Ban Ki-moon receives the German Media Prize in Baden-Baden, Germany.
11 March	Security Council askes the Secretary-General to replace all military or police units from any contributing country that had failed to hold sexual predators accountable (resolution 2272).
16 March	Parliament elects U Htin Kyaw the first civilian President of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar in more than five decades.

20 March	US President Obama visits Cuba to end the Cold War and restore normal bilateral relations.
22 March	More than 30 people die in terrorist attacks in Brussels, Belgium, for which Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Da'esh) claims responsibility.
24 March	International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) sentences Radovan Karadžić, former President of the Republika Srpska in Bosnia and Herzegovina, to 40 years imprisonment.
29 March	Japan's new security law takes effect allowing its troops to fight overseas for the first time since World War II.
31 March	Leaders of China and the United States announce in Joint Presidential Statement that their countries will sign the 2015 Paris Climate Change Agreement.
31 March	International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY) in The Hague acquits the Serbian politician Vojislav Šešelj of all charges, including crimes against humanity.
4 April	Last parts of the UN Headquarters' North Lawn Building are dismantled.
4 April	Pritzker Architecture Prize ceremony takes place at UN Headquarters.
8 April	Nicaragua ratifies the Amendment to the UN Convention on the Physical Protection of Nuclear Material, bringing the number of adherents to 102, the threshold required for the Convention to come into effect in 30 days.
10 April	Nationwide cessation of hostilities in Yemen begins at midnight.
19 April	Ban Ki-moon inaugurates the permanent premises of the International Criminal Court in The Hague.
19 April	Patricio Aylwin Azócar, Chile's first elected President following military dictatorship era, dies.

19–21 April UN General Assembly holds Special Session on the world drug problem in New York.

22 April World leaders from 175 countries gather at UN Headquarters for the official signing of the 2015 Paris Climate Change Agreement.

27 April Security Council unanimously adopts resolution 2282 (2016) on Review of UN Peacebuilding Architecture.

28 April Security Council terminates all arms, travel and financial sanctions against Côte d'Ivoire with immediate effect (resolution 2283) and extends the mandate of the UN Operation in Côte d'Ivoire (UNOCI) for a final period until 30 June 2017 (resolution 2284).

29 April Transitional Government of National Unity (TGNU) is formed in South Sudan, an important milestone in implementation of the Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan.

2 May Djibouti-based UN Verification and Inspection Mechanism (UNVIM) starts its operations. UNVIM facilitates the flow of commercial goods and services to Yemen, while ensuring compliance with the arms embargo established pursuant to Security Council resolution 2216 (2015).

10–11 May General Assembly convenes a high-level thematic debate on challenges to international peace and security.

13 May General Assembly appoints Erik Solheim of Norway as Executive Director of the UN Environment Programme (UNEP).

18 May Ban Ki-moon appoints Patricia Espinosa Cantellano of Mexico as Executive Secretary of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change.

20 May Ban Ki-moon announces the appointments of Mary Robinson of Ireland and Macharia Kamau of Kenya as Special Envoys on El Niño and Climate.

23–24 May	More than 65 Heads of State and Government gather in Istanbul, Turkey, for the first-ever World Humanitarian Summit to address the record numbers of people in immediate crisis throughout the world.
25 May	Security Council terminates, with immediate effect, the sanctions regime on Liberia, also disbanding the Committee and its Panel of Experts, established in 2003 to monitor the measures (resolution 2288).
27 May	G-7 Summit in Ise-Shima, Japan.
27 May	President Obama visits Hiroshima, Japan, the first US President to do so, but stops short of apologizing for the atomic bombing.
30 May	Extraordinary African Chambers in the Senegalese Courts find Hissène Habré, former President of Chad, guilty of forced sexual slavery, voluntary homicide, kidnappings of individuals followed by their disappearances, summary executions and torture.
31 May	Netherlands and the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons–UN Joint Investigative Mechanism (JIM) sign the host country agreement. The JIM is mandated by the Security Council to identify those involved in the use of chemicals as weapons in Syria.
31 May	Security Council renews until 31 May 2017 a package of sanctions imposed on those South Sudan's leaders who block peace, security and stability (resolution 2290).
1 June	Security Council condemns the recent failed ballistic missile launches of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) on 31 May and 27–28 April as grave violation of the DPRK's international obligations under Security Council resolutions 1718 (2006), 1874 (2009), 2087 (2013), 2094 (2013), and 2270 (2016).

3 June France hosts Ministerial Conference Meeting on the Middle East Peace Process to create conditions to end the Israeli–Palestinian conflict.

3 June First-ever UN Chiefs of Police Summit (UN COPS) takes place at UN Headquarters with more than 100 police leaders from around the world.

8–10 June General Assembly holds a three-day high-level meeting on ending AIDS.

12 June Terrorist attack at nightclub in Orlando, Florida, targets persons due to their sexual orientation, killing 49 people.

13 June General Assembly elects, by a vote, Peter Thomson of Fiji as President of its seventy-first session. Peter Thomson receives 94 votes, Andreas Mavroyiannis of Cyprus, 90 votes, with 1 abstention.

17 June General Assembly approves the appropriation of $7.86 billion for 15 peacekeeping operations for the 2016–2017 fiscal period.

23 June Security Council extends its arms embargo, asset freeze and travel ban on the Democratic Republic of Congo until 1 July 2017 (resolution 2293).

23 June Government of Colombia and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia—People's Army (FARC-EP) sign the Agreement on Bilateral and Definitive Cease Fire and Laying Down of Arms in Havana, a step towards a final peace agreement to end the armed conflict in Colombia.

23 June Ban Ki-moon appoints Ivan Šimonović of Croatia as Special Adviser on the Responsibility to Protect.

23 June United Kingdom votes to leave the European Union, by 52% in favour and 48% against, in a national referendum, forcing the resignation of Prime Minister David Cameron.

24 June Dentsu, Havas, IPG, Omnicom, Publicis Groupe and WPP, the six largest global communications businesses, launch Common Ground initiative

to advance the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the SDGs.

28 June General Assembly elects Ethiopia, Kazakhstan, Bolivia and Sweden to serve as non-permanent members of the Security Council for 2017–2018. After five rounds of inconclusive voting, Italy and the Netherlands agree to split two-year term.

29 June Security Council authorizes the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) to adopt a more proactive and robust posture (resolution 2295).

30 June China joins the International Organization for Migration (IOM).

30 June General Assembly elects Italy to serve as non-permanent member of the Security Council for 2017–2018. Based on the bilateral agreement, Italy will cede its place after one year to the Netherlands.

30 June Human Rights Council appoints a UN Independent Expert to monitor and report on levels of violence and discrimination against LGBT (lesbian/gay/bisexual/transgender) people globally.

1 July Middle Eastern Quartet (UN, Russia, the United States and the European Union) releases its report on the Israeli–Palestinian conflict highlighting the major threats to the two-State solution and providing recommendations on how to advance this solution.

5 July US and Japan agree to tighten eligibility for the US-Japan Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA) signed in 1960, setting out the legal status of US bases and military personnel in Japan.

7 July Chilcot inquiry, the report on the British war in Iraq in 2003 concludes that Prime Minister Tony Blair launched war on flawed intelligence at a time when Iraq presented no imminent threat and diplomatic options had not been exhausted.

7 July	Security Council extends its authorization of the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM), agreeing with the Secretary-General that conditions are not appropriate for the deployment of a UN peacekeeping mission (resolution 2297).
8–9 July	NATO summit in Warsaw agrees to deploy a multinational force to the Baltic republics and Poland, getting closer to Russia's borders.
13 July	Theresa May becomes prime minister, Britain's second female head of government after Margaret Thatcher.
14 July	Terrorist attack in Nice, France, kills 86 people.
15–16 July	Attempted military *coup* in Turkey.
20 July	World Meteorological Organization (WMO) warns that 2016 is on track to be the world's hottest year on record.
21 July	Security Council holds the first round of the informal voting for the UN Secretary-General candidates.
25 July	General Assembly approves the relationship agreement between the United Nations and the International Organization for Migration (IOM).
1 August	European Commission and the African Union Commission sign an agreement in Brussels for a €50 million European Union contribution to the Multi-National Joint Task Force (MNJTF), an initiative of the Lake Chad Basin countries and Benin to combat Boko Haram in the sub-region.
18 August	US Court of Appeals for the Second Circuit upholds the immunity of the UN from legal proceedings in the case of Georges et al. v. United Nations et. al. in accordance with the United Nations Charter and other international treaties.
5–21 August	XXXI Olympic Games in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.
22 August	International Criminal Court opens the trial of Ahmad al Faqi al Mahdi, an alleged member of Ansar Dine, charged with the war crime of intentionally directing attacks against cultural property in Timbuktu, Mali, in June and July 2012.

3 September	President Xi Jinping of China and President Barack Obama of the United States deposit the legal instruments ratifying and joining the 2015 Paris Climate Change Agreement.
8 September	UN Peacekeeping Defence Ministerial meeting in London.
8 September	Successful removal of all chemical weapons precursors from Libya, in an operation facilitated and coordinated by the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) and endorsed by the Security Council through resolution 2298 (2016).
13 September	Security Council approves the deployment of 450 observers of the new UN political mission in Colombia to assist the parties in ending a half century of conflict (resolution 2307).
19 September	General Assembly adopts the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants at UN summit for refugees and migrants of almost 200 Heads of State and Government in New York, endorsing a collective response to record displacement numbers around the world.
21 September	Ban Ki-moon and the International Olympic Committee (OIC) President Thomas Bach unveil a cornerstone plaque to commemorate the UN-IOC partnership to build a UN staff recreation facility.
27 September	International Criminal Court recognises Ahmad Al-Faqi Al-Mahdi guilty of war crimes for the destruction of religious and historical monuments in Timbuktu.
27 September	Shimon Peres, former President of Israel, dies.
6 October	Security Council extends authorization to intercept vessels suspected of illegal smuggling from Libya, with 14 votes in favour and 1 abstention (Venezuela) (resolution 2312).
7 October	Juan Manuel Santos, President of Colombia, is awarded the Nobel Peace Prize.

7 October International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) adopts new rules to limit the rapid growth of emissions from the international aviation sector.

7 October Security Council fails to adopt two draft texts, one from France and Spain, and the other from Russia, addressing the situation in Syria. The French and Spanish text demanding an immediate halt to all flights over Aleppo receive 11 affirmative votes, two abstentions (Angola and China), and two negative votes (Russia and Venezuela). The Russian text, urging an immediate cessation of hostilities, receive a vote of 4 in favour (China, Egypt, Russia, Venezuela) to 9 against (France, Japan, Malaysia, New Zealand, Senegal, Spain, Ukraine, United Kingdom, and United States), with 2 abstentions (Angola and Uruguay).

13 October General Assembly appoints by acclamation António Guterres of Portugal, former UN High Commissioner for Refugees, as UN Secretary-General in a historically transparent and inclusive selection process.

13 October Security Council renews the mandate of the UN Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH) (resolution 2313).

13 October King Bhumibol Adulyadejn of Thailand, one of history's longest-reigning monarchs, dies.

14 October Ban Ki-moon establishes the UN Haiti Cholera Response Multi-Partner Trust Fund to finance the new UN system approach to cholera in Haiti.

21 October South Africa deposits its instrument of withdrawal from the Rome Statute, the founding treaty of the International Criminal Court, with the UN Secretary General.

24 October Denmark announces the creation of the "Museum for the United Nations - UN Live" headquartered in Copenhagen.

27 October Burundi gives notice of its intention to withdraw from the International Criminal Court.

31 October Security Council extends the mandate of the UN-OPCW Joint Investigative Mechanism, mandated to determine responsibility for the use of chemical weapons in Syria, until 18 November (resolution 2314).

4 November The 2015 Paris Climate Change Agreement enters into force.

8 November Security Council renews its authorization of the European-led multinational stabilization force there (EUFOR ALTHEA) for another year (resolution 2315).

8 November Donald Trump is elected forty-fifth President of the United States.

9 November Security Council renews for another year its authorization for international naval forces to join in fighting piracy off the coast of Somalia (resolution 2316).

10 November Security Council extends the arms embargo on Somalia until 15 November 2017 and reaffirms its arms embargo on Eritrea (resolution 2317).

17 November UN Secretary-General is made *Grand Chevalier de la Légion d'honneur* by President François Hollande of France.

17 November Security Council extends the mandate of the UN-OPCW Joint Investigative Mechanism for an additional year (resolution 2319).

26 November Fidel Castro Ruz, former President of Cuba, dies.

30 November Security Council strengthens its sanctions regime against the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and condemns its 9 September nuclear test (resolution 2321).

1 December Secretary-General apologizes for the United Nations role in Haiti cholera epidemic.

5 December Security Council fails to adopt a draft resolution to cease hostilities in Aleppo by 11 votes in favour to 3 against (China, Russia, and Venezuela), with 1 abstention (Angola).

9 December Security Council narrowly adopts procedural vote to authorize discussion on the situation in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and its implications for international peace and security, by 9 votes in favour to 5 against (Angola, China, Egypt, Russia, Venezuela), with 1 abstention (Senegal).

9 December General Assembly adopts a resolution demanding an immediate end to all hostilities in Syria, by a recorded vote of 122 in favour to 13 against with 36 abstentions, amidst escalating offensive by the Syrian authorities to liberate Aleppo.

12 December António Guterres of Portugal is sworn in as the next UN Secretary-General and the General Assembly pays tribute to his predecessor, Ban Ki-moon.

13 December Security Council extends the mandate of the UN Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL) by nine months, until 15 September 2017 (resolution 2323).

14 December Security Council in a special tribute meeting pays tribute to outgoing UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon praising his dedicated work (resolution 2324).

15 December UN Secretary-General designate, António Guterres, announces he will appoint Amina J. Mohammed of Nigeria as UN Deputy Secretary-General, and Maria Luiza Ribeiro Viotti of Brazil as Chef de Cabinet.

19 December Security Council demands all parties to provide the UN with safe, immediate and unhindered access to monitor evacuations from the eastern districts of Aleppo and the protection of civilians throughout Syria (resolution 2328).

23 December Security Council decides against imposing arms embargo on South Sudan, by a vote of 7 in favour to none against, with 8 abstentions.

23 December Security Council reaffirms, by 14 votes, with the United States abstaining, that Israel's

establishment of settlements in Palestinian territory occupied since 1967, including East Jerusalem, has no legal validity and constitutes a flagrant violation under international law and a major obstacle to the vision of two States living side-by-side in peace and security, within internationally recognized borders (resolution 2334).

27 December Prime Minister Shinzo Abe of Japan visits Pearl Harbor with US President Barack Obama, becoming the first Japanese Prime Minister to visit the site.

31 December Security Council unanimously endorses a resolution supporting efforts by Russia and Turkey to end nearly six years of bloodshed in Syria and jump-start a political process (resolution 2336).

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M. Jesenský, *The United Nations under Ban Ki-moon*,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-12220-1

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https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-12220-1

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